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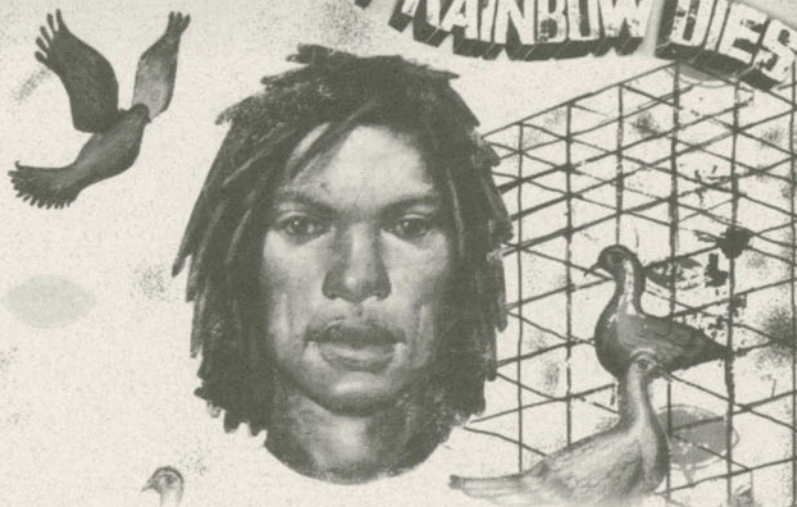


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rita williams-garcia

EVERY TIME A RAINBOW DIES



★ "Despite its gritty milieu and violent central motif, this is a love story, and a fine one. Sixteen-year-old Jamaica-born Thulani's only friends are the pigeons he tends on the roof of [his] Brooklyn brownstone. From the roof, he witnesses a rape. After he intercedes on the victim's behalf, he becomes obsessed with her. . . . Well-observed and subtle, Williams-Garcia's novel artfully interplays harsh urban realities with adolescent innocence." — Starred review / *The Horn Book*

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T H E B U L L E T I N

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH REVIEWS

*	Asterisks denote books of special distinction.
R	Recommended.
Ad	Additional book of acceptable quality for collections needing more material in the area.
M	Marginal book that is so slight in content or has so many weaknesses in style or format that it should be given careful consideration before purchase.
NR	Not recommended.
SpC	Subject matter or treatment will tend to limit the book to specialized collections.
SpR	A book that will have appeal for the unusual reader only. Recommended for the special few who will read it.

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THE BIG PICTURE

A Poke in the I: A Collection of Concrete Poems

comp. by Paul B. Janeczko; illustrated by Chris Raschka

Paul Janeczko is one of the most reliable and useful anthologists in children's literature. Never content simply to rearrange poems displayed in previous anthologies, he's sought far afield and brought new voices to young audiences. He's worked in different formats, focused on different themes, and appealed to different readerships. Here he assembles a collection eminently suitable for introduction of that most book-friendly genre, concrete poetry.

With its tendency towards inventive playfulness, concrete poetry can be extremely accessible to young readers (the book's concise introduction is all kids will need) as well as sophisticated enough for older. The lot presented here is a diverse one: some of the thirty poems will click immediately with readers, whereas others may tease and puzzle. Youngsters may have already been introduced to the concept of pattern poems, represented here by John Hollander's elegant "Swan and Shadow" and Mary Ellen Holt's astonishingly evocative "Forsythia," among others. Other kinds of typographical gamesmanship may be new to them: Monica Kulling's "Tennis Anyone?" makes its reader bounce from one side to another along with the ball in order to read the poem; Helen Chasin's "Joy Sonnet in a Random Universe" offers, in a tidy square of the proper fourteen lines, a goofy and spirited evocation of joy (" . . . Hey nonny nonny. La la la la la la la . . ."); Robert Carola's "Stowaway" neatly secretes the first *a* between the two *w*'s of the poem's text that is also its title. Contributors include writers for adults as well as writers for children, and among their number are familiar names such as Douglas Florian, John Agard, and Roger McGough. Most of the entries are enticing, some are quite funny, and several are genuinely brain-tickling, and even the table of contents gets into the mood, appearing, logically enough, as a table.

The layout leaves plenty of space for the verse to move, with white space dominant in every spread. Raschka's artwork is inventive and lively, and he seems to have created a whole new anthropoid species just for this book. These rectangular-headed beings come in an array of colors, including primary, and they gambol about the snowy pages in torn-paper clothing. The use of white line instead of black line to indicate features gives these curious folk an otherworldly look, but their expressiveness is undeniable, whether it be the green, cucumber audience intently watching tennis, the scarlet dancer with billowing crimson hair, or, for a change of pace, the round-headed yellow guy who peers up into one poem or recoils from another. The artwork's tension between parts (some of which are also text) and whole mirrors that of the verse, so there's a congenial conceptual companionship between the two.

While there are obvious pleasure-reading possibilities here for kids of various tastes, this title also begs for all kinds of classroom appearances. It can be used to

inspire philosophical exploration (are all these entries poetry? If not, why not?) or, of course, to prompt similar projects for readers. Since some of the poems have appeared and been illustrated elsewhere (Douglas Florian's entries being the most obvious examples), there are good opportunities for provocative comparison and contrast and interrogation of the differences in presentation. Challenge kids to read the poems aloud or even to try some physical approximation of the concrete poem, if you've got room. Let versaphobes use this for a different path into the poetry they find stifling.

Good books open readers to new horizons. This book offers new possibilities even with that old acquaintance, poetry, and it makes those possibilities fresh, enticing, and vivid; this poke in the I just leads readers to see anew. (Imprint information appears on p. 366.)

Deborah Stevenson, Associate Editor



NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

ALEXANDER, LLOYD *The Gawgon and the Boy*. Dutton, 2001 [256p]

ISBN 0-525-46677-0 \$17.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-6

David is deliriously ill with pneumonia in Depression-era Philadelphia; chapters about his illness and his relatives' decisions about his care are interspersed with chapters of fantastic imagined adventures featuring David as protagonist. During his long convalescence, David is turned over to Aunt Annie, a retired schoolteacher, who is to oversee his education. He soon discovers that his elderly aunt, or the "Gawgon" (from Gorgon), as he comes to call her affectionately, is much more fun than she at first appears to be, and his studies become a delightful excuse for the convalescent David and his invalid aunt to enjoy each other's company. Unfortunately, the characters and settings of the fantasy chapters vary widely for approximately the first half of the book, keeping the story of David's recovery from gaining momentum, and once the fantasy chapters evolve into a recognizable framework they come to an abrupt end. The last segment of David's story is packed to overflowing with poignant departures and sentimental events. Nevertheless, Aunt Annie's unconventional teaching methods and unpredictable assignments may encourage readers to look beyond the unbalanced plot strands and to examine their own elderly relatives for the spark of humor that makes the Gawgon such an appealing companion. KM

ASHMAN, LINDA *Maxwell's Magic Mix-up*; illus. by Regan Dunnick. Simon, 2001 32p

ISBN 0-689-83178-1 \$16.00

R 5-8 yrs

It's Louise's seventh birthday, but the entertainer for her party cancels and Maxwell the Magician is called in at the last minute. Unfortunately, all of Maxwell's

magic seems to go awry, turning Louise into a rock, changing her guests into various animals, and transforming her father into a broom. Just as things seem to be hitting rock bottom ("Mom is sobbing. Max is pacing/ Pete is eating chips and cheese./ In the midst of all this chaos/ Sits the birthday rock, Louise"), Maxwell's nephew Al arrives and puts everything back in order. Ashman's rhyming stanzas occasionally descend into jingle but generally carry the humorous story forward with rollicking and rhythmic energy. The gleefully frenetic illustrations suit the text well; Dunnick's use of line recalls Quentin Blake's drawings, but she fills her characters in with watercolor and adds zippy crayon lines to depict the active movement of this chaotic parry. Use this for a birthday-party readaloud or for a silly celebration any day. KM

BEDARD, MICHAEL *The Wolf of Gubbio*; illus. by Murray Kimber. Stoddart, 2001 24p
ISBN 0-7737-3250-0 \$15.95 R 5-9 yrs

St. Francis of Assisi, the Poverello, arrives in the walled town of Gubbio with a small band of followers. The townsfolk whisper that "he understands the language of bird and beast" and that "some say he works wonders." One young boy of Gubbio does not think that the "little poor one"—barefoot, his coarse robe belted with rope—looks like a wonder worker; nevertheless, he follows along when the man sets off to confront the wolf that has been ravaging the town. The boy then witnesses the meeting between St. Francis and the wolf, a legendary encounter that has long captured the popular imagination. Bedard's somewhat staid but still engaging retelling has the immediacy of an eyewitness account, enhanced by the voice of the young boy who is the first-person narrator. The formality of the text is echoed in Kimber's paintings, which are a stylistic cross between controlled cubism and pre-Renaissance perspective. Full- and double-page illustrations are rendered in earthy greens and oranges, with a glaze of parchment yellow that makes them appear antique. Red-roofed houses and cypress trees decorate the landscapes and townscapes while monumental figures of Gubbio's citizens and the visiting friars walk through the scenery. The figures have a sculptural look to them, their faces notable for their chiseled features and flat planes; the narrator is more softly drawn, less statuesque and thus more accessible. The wolf is a disproportionately huge beast, a worthy object of terror. Cleanly drafted black-and-white drawings add variety to the book's elegant design. An afterword gives background on the saint and the legend. JMD

BROOKS, BRUCE *All That Remains*. Atheneum, 2001 168p
ISBN 0-689-83351-2 \$16.00 Ad Gr. 6-10

The three novellas in this volume ("All That Remains," "Playing the Creeps," and "Teeing Up") deal, somewhat eccentrically, with the impact of death on assorted adolescents. "All That Remains" is a morbidly funny, offbeat piece on the death of a woman with AIDS, and the way her niece, nephew, and partner circumvent the rules and regulations about the burial of her remains. "Playing the Creeps" features two cousins of disparate personalities drawing closer together after the death of one's father, and "Teeing Up" is an uneven but humorous story about an adolescent foursome (three boys and one at-first-unwelcome girl) playing a portentous round of golf. The stories are sometimes choppy in exposition, but Brooks has a knack for characterization that makes even the sketchiest individuals memo-

table. The first-person narrators of the first two novellas have engaging, believable voices, and the supporting characters are well-drawn. The characters in *Teeing Off* are not nearly as well-developed; the boys mouth far too many platitudes for their age and adjust much too rapidly and sensitively to the presence of a girl in their male midst. Still, there are some heartfelt moments that nearly make up for the shallow typecasting. All the adolescents depicted are sporadically too arch and self-aware, but the humor and humanity that Brooks allows them will draw readers into the emotional heart of the tales. JMD

BUCHANAN, JANE *Hank's Story*. Farrar, 2001 136p
ISBN 0-374-32836-6 \$16.00

Ad Gr. 4-7

Hank has quite a dramatic story; sent west on an orphan train in 1923 after the death of his parents, he and his older brother, Pete, are placed on a hardscrabble Nebraska farm with the demanding Olsens. Mr. Olsen's drunken abuse soon drives Pete to run away, leaving twelve-year-old Hank as scapegoat and farm labor as well as butt of a schoolfellow's bullying. The increasingly lonely boy finds a small solace in animals, which brings him together with local eccentric and animal-lover Molly McIntire. When life at the Olsens becomes unbearable, Hank ventures through a blizzard for the safety of Molly's barn, but that might not be enough to extricate him from his troubled life. Hank is so beset that readers can't help but feel for him; his isolation and sadness are poignantly described. The mistreated-orphan story is largely predictable right up to its happy ending, however, and plot points such as Pete's departure and Hank's relationship with the girls in his class (one of whom featured in Buchanan's previous book, *Gratefully Yours*, BCCB 4/97) are awkwardly interwoven and never satisfactorily explored. Still, there's perennial appeal to a story of a kid down on his luck, and aficionados who relished *Jake's Orphan* may want to continue their orphan-train explorations here. DS

BUNTING, EVE *Riding the Tiger*; illus. by David Frampton. Clarion, 2001 32p
ISBN 0-395-79731-4 \$16.00

Ad Gr. 3-5

Ten-year-old Danny, new in town and lonely, is intrigued by a passing tiger's offer of a ride, and he mounts up. The tiger takes him through the neighborhood, making his presence known and scorning people while sweet-talking his rider about the power and respect that the tiger's company will bring to him; when Danny thinks maybe he'd like to get off, the tiger makes it clear that dismounting is difficult and dangerous. Finally, though, Danny faces an ethical choice when the tiger threatens a harmless, helpless man, and he manages a quick descent—which vanquishes the tiger. It's hard to make a good picture book out of an extended metaphor, and the strain shows—there's definitely some heavy-handedness, and the solution will be obviously simplistic even to young readers. Bunting does, however, manage a taut menace in the text, and the tension sharpens the atmosphere so that it's clear this is no ordinary ramble. Though the human figures are sometimes inappropriately cute, Frampton's woodcuts, grounded by extensive black and tinged with dark mustards and reds, are strong and moody in the cityscapes and tiger depictions, where the sharp-edged lines add to the impact; the smoky evening lighting adds to the suspense. This isn't subtle and its sentiments aren't original, but the offbeat exploration of a kid on the verge of trouble may provoke discussion and contemplation in readers. DS

BURLEIGH, ROBERT *I Love Going through This Book*; illus. by Dan Yaccarino. HarperCollins, 2001 38p
 Library ed. ISBN 0-06-0288056-X \$15.89
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028805-1 \$15.95 Ad 4-7 yrs

The narrator of this story about reading a story could be termed never to have metabook he didn't like. He enjoys everything about this book, the highs and lows, the easy meadows and the daunting dark woods, the landscape features and the various people he meets in it; finally he reaches the end, but "the fun's not over yet"—he'll just "walk around to the front of the book// and go back through again!" The literary enthusiasm will be gratifying to adults and perhaps inspiring to kids, and the metaphoric adventure made literal is an intriguing concept. Burleigh (author of *Black Whiteness*, BCCB 2/98, etc.) isn't up to his usual standard, though: the verse seesaws awkwardly and relentlessly along, and the narrative skips so lightly over the adventures that it seems less a story in its own right than a summary introduction to a real telling. Yaccarino's thickly modeled shapes bring some needed solidity to the proceedings, and his topknotted protagonist provides a useful focal point. There's an appealing compendium of chipper critters throughout the various double-page landscapes, and the art includes a few diverting reminders, such as painted holes in the paper "revealing" other pages and a readerly thumb ready to turn over a new leaf, that this is a book-housed landscape. There are better book-referential books around, but this has a cheery simplicity that may suit audiences too young for those more sophisticated works. DS

CASELEY, JUDITH *Bully*; written and illus. by Judith Caseley. Greenwillow, 2001 [32p]
 Library ed. ISBN 0-688-17868-5 \$15.89
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-17867-7 \$15.95
 Reviewed from galleys Ad 6-8 yrs

Mickey's old friend Jack isn't so friendly these days ("You used to be a mouse," said Mickey. "And now you've turned into a great big rat!"), insisting on cookie payoffs, breaking Mickey's pencil, and tripping Mickey in the cafeteria. Mickey's parents give him advice, but nothing seems to help the situation until Mickey comes up with his own solution. The bullying story is a familiar one, and the happy solution (Mickey and Jack laugh together) seems more requisite than well-grounded; the text is also quite lengthy for the picture-book format. Caseley capably captures Mickey's desperation, however, making clear just how haunted his school days are with just a few incidents. The watercolor illustrations have a sturdy simplicity that gives a note of reassurance to the story; it's not always clear, especially at the beginning, who is which character, but Mickey's worried mien is readily identifiable. This isn't going to solve bullying problems, but kids may at least appreciate the reminder that it's happened to others and that they survived. DS

CURLEE, LYNN *Brooklyn Bridge*; written and illus. by Lynn Curlee. Atheneum, 2001 36p
 ISBN 0-689-83183-8 \$18.00 R Gr. 4-7

Curlee's titles are among the best starting places for awed middle-graders with "How did they do that?" on their minds, and now the Brooklyn Bridge gets the grandiose treatment recently accorded its more decorative cousins in *Rushmore*

(BCCB 3/99) and *Liberty* (BCCB 5/00). Biography, social history, and introductory engineering are, as usual, precisely balanced, with human-interest angles (there's tragedy aplenty associated with this marvel) spicing cogent explanations of caissons and anchorages and diagonal stays. Curlee curiously relegates several diagrams and cross-sections to end materials, when they might have been more usefully placed beside explanatory text. Readers might also wish, since figure drawing is not Curlee's strong suit, that some page space lavished on Chief Engineer Roebling and wife had been expended on more breathtaking views of the span and its supports instead. Nonetheless, this is a grand yet practical tribute to a grand yet practical edifice, and children who dream beyond their Legos will be delighted. EB

DEANS, SIS *Racing the Past*. Holt, 2001 151p
ISBN 0-8050-6635-7 \$15.95

Ad Gr. 6-9

Eleven-year-old Ricky Gordon is no stranger to trouble: he's lived his life under the thumb of an abusive father, whose recent death has left the family stunned and healing, and he's the target of bully Bugsie McCarthy, with whom he's had one fight too many. Since the principal insists Ricky avoid further Bugsie battles, Ricky eschews the school bus that's Bugsie's favorite taunting ground and instead travels to and from school on foot; soon he's turning it into a regular athletic run, improving time and technique and becoming somewhat of a local celebrity in his attempts to beat the bus. Ricky's pleasure in his growing capability is gratifying, especially since this is a kid who really needs to succeed at something, and his bitterness about his father's mistreatment credibly seethes even as he's showing his father's imprint in his own behavior. This is also a considerably different picture of bucolic Maine than we usually see: the Gordons are dirt-poor and Ricky's father kept their house in near-squalor, and both Ricky and his second-grade brother swear like troopers à la the old man. The organization is problematic, however, with misleading emphases, especially at the beginning, and strands and meanings get somewhat confused. Nonetheless, readers will appreciate Ricky's hard-won maturation. DS

DURANT, ALAN *Big Bad Bunny*; illus. by Guy Parker-Rees. Dutton, 2001 26p
ISBN 0-525-46667-3 \$15.99

Ad 3-6 yrs

There's a lapine on the loose ("Here comes Big Bad Bunny./ He's coming to get your money!"), and he's relieving the locals of their assets, taking corn from the cashless little chick, a nut from the unmoneyed little squirrel, milk from the impoverished little goat. Finally, BBB wises up and hits the bank; Wise Old Bunny at the bank responds by burying the would-be robber in sacks of money and only lets him out on the promise of reform, whereupon Big Bad repents, makes restitution, and becomes Very Good Bunny. The rhyme doesn't really hop along and the bunny's sudden rehabilitation isn't all that satisfying (though his acquaintances do miss the excitement of his robbing days). The notion of a big bad bunny is this picture book's main allure, but it is pretty darn alluring. The illustrations make the most of the concept, picturing the huge bun in sombrero and gunbelt and spreading an even huger purple shadow across the desert on oversized pages; the art's tendency towards sweeps of acid chartreuse is somewhat offputting, but the bunny details (his gunbelt carries carrots, and that's what he uses to hold up the bank) will tickle viewers. Despite its flaws, this may be just right to entertain some young bunnies. DS

ECCLES, MARY *By Lizzie*. Dial, 2001 [128p]

ISBN 0-8037-2608-2 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-5

Feeling slightly shortchanged by her post-Christmas birthday, nine-year-old Lizzie coopts Mom's old typewriter, determined to write fascinating stories of her own. Each month of the year brings a different story: Lizzie tells of her dreaded swimming lessons ("Even the dog swims better than I do"), the contest between Lizzie and her best friend to see whose brother is the biggest pest, and class Secret Santas (Lizzie gets the teacher). The tales are completely self-contained (and consequently suitable for reading aloud), and they've got a Clearyesque sense of the dramas of daily life. Eccles has an uncanny recall for sibling dynamics: there's no smarmy adult appeasement here, just accurate relation of Lizzie's struggle for her share of the pie between a superior older brother and a wannabe-Lizzie toddler sister (to whom a fed-up Lizzie finally fiercely hisses, "My name is Liz-zie. With two z's and no d's. You could *try* to get it right"). There's abundant truth here in an appealing and readable package, and readers will find this reassuring as well as enjoyable. DS

EDWARDS, PAMELA DUNCAN *Boston Tea Party*; illus. by Henry Cole. Putnam, 2001 32p

ISBN 0-399-23357-1 \$15.99

M 5-8 yrs

For the youngest listeners, Edwards recounts events prefatory to the American Revolution in "House That Jack Built" styled verses intended to entertain as they inform: "This is the king on his English throne/ who declared, 'Tax the tea!'/ that was made from the leaves/ that grew on a bush in a far-off land/ and became part of the Boston Tea Party." Clearly neither rhyme nor scansion figures into the presentation, and although the cumulative construct reinforces facts through repetition, the nursery-rhyme allusion unintentionally casts the coming armed insurrection as a rather droll affair. Cole's acrylic and colored pencil spreads generalize the bad guys (i.e., British) as somewhat buffoonish snobs and the good guys (i.e., Patriots) as righteously outraged heroes. A quartet of mice serve as a sort of kibitzing Greek chorus ("Dressing up as Mohawks will fool the British!"; "Make sure you don't dump any cheese by mistake!"), offering background and keeping youngsters focused on the action, but upstaging historical figures along the way. A closing scene shows a contemporary multicultural crowd at a fireworks display to celebrate the Fourth of July, and it is this connection which, in the end, may make this title useful; an appended timeline may be of interest to listeners who suspect there's more to this tale than soggy tea leaves and talking mice. EB

GALLO, DONALD R., ed. *On the Fringe*. Dial, 2001 224p

ISBN 0-8037-2656-2 \$17.99

R Gr. 7-10

The eleven short stories in this dark collection depict the suffering of adolescents living outside the accepted norm. The table of contents is a who's who of young-adult literature: Jack Gantos, Joan Bauer, Chris Crutcher, Nancy Werlin, Ron Koertge, M. E. Kerr, Angela Johnson, and others have written entries specifically for this compilation. Gallo's intentions are clear from his introduction, in which he expresses the hope that the stories will "provide glimpses into the minds of teenagers who are different from their more popular peers" and "offer thought-provoking experiences that may result in greater understanding and tolerance of others." Overall, the stories center on feelings of powerlessness and alienation,

with little evidence of hope or humor. Thankfully, Koertge's "Geeks Bearing Gifts" and Werlin's "Shortcut" don't depict geekness as a condition to be avoided at all costs; their geeky characters, though put upon, are brave and sarcastic instead of terrified and conciliatory. Crutcher's "Geeks with Guns" offers an unsettling, mournful look at the survivors of a tragic school shooting and provides a strong conclusion to an uneven collection. While the compilation as a whole has an unfortunate tonal sameness, individual stories are thought-provoking and compelling. Brief but earnest biographies about each author are included after each story. JMD

GREENBERG, JAN *Vincent Van Gogh: Portrait of an Artist*; by Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan. Delacorte, 2001 [144p] illus. with photographs
Library ed. ISBN 0-385-90005-8 \$18.99
Trade ed. ISBN 0-385-32806-0 \$14.95
Reviewed from galleys R* Gr. 7-12

Stellar art writers Greenberg and Jordan (authors of *Chuck Close: Up Close*, BCCB 5/98 and other excellent art titles) turn to their first portrait for older readers, with excellent results. As they acknowledge in the introduction, it's hard to get past the "more-or-less true" things people know about Van Gogh: "He was a great artist who painted sunflowers. He went mad. He cut off his ear." The authorial pair remedy that problem handily, vividly depicting the artist's troubled life from his childhood in his father's parsonage through his doomed efforts to find himself a professional niche to his obsessive, if not satisfying, creation of art. As depicted here, he'll be magnetic to adolescent readers, with his furious rejection of conventions, his impossible standards, and his absorption in his art to the point of ignoring worldly matters (such as income, with which his brother fortunately provided him); they may also absorb just what a difficult family member Van Gogh was and how much he owed to the assistance of his puzzled family, particularly his loving brother. The book also does a good job of putting Van Gogh into a cultural and artistic context, discussing his relationship with artists of the time (several of whom wanted to keep a safe distance from the unpredictable Dutchman) and artistic movements (he rejected the prettiness of the Impressionists). Judicious use of primary sources and well-chosen detail brings the account to brilliant life: the prostitute to whom he gave his severed earlobe accepted his apology cheerfully, noting that half the people in town were mad and he wasn't to worry; the Parisian paint-store owner who took Van Gogh's paintings in trade sold one after the artist's death only for exactly the amount Van Gogh owed him. Readers will see not just the man but also the paintings anew after reading this biography. A helpful map lays out Van Gogh's wanderings, and an insert with family photographs and color reproductions of Van Gogh's work will be included. End matter will be extensive, including endnotes, a glossary of artists and terms, a timeline, a bibliography, and an index. DS

HAUTMAN, PETE *Hole in the Sky*. Simon, 2001 179p
ISBN 0-689-83118-8 \$16.00 Ad Gr. 7-10

As the prologue explains, the year 2028 brought a lethal, quickly spreading flu to the human race; now, in 2038, the diminished population is divided into Survivors (all of whom have lost their hair, making them readily identifiable, and who have suffered some permanent impairment), and those yet to catch the disease.

Ceej—Charles Jacob—is sixteen, living a self-sufficient life with his uncle and with his Survivor sister, Harryette, in rural Arizona; he's left on his own with his friend, Tim, when it looks like there's trouble with the river that provides the water supply and Tim's father, Ceej's uncle, and Harryette journey to open the dam. When they fail to return as expected, Ceej and Tim take off after them, on their way encountering Bella, a part-Hopi girl in search of the legendary Sipapuni, place of emergence, through which they can reach another world. The three discover that the lost relatives have been taken by the Kinka, a survivor cult, and they determine to save them—but for some it may be too late. The deadly-flu plot is a sci-fi standard, and though Hautman fudges on his science a bit the details of the disease are narratively effectively conceived; the Kinka and their religious view of their place are particularly ingenious and credible. The story moves considerably more slowly than one would expect for such an exciting subject, however, and the four different narrators (Ceej, Bella, Tim, and Harryette each get a turn) confuse rather than enrich. The book is imbued with a certain millenarian vision, with hints of the future for the children of the Kinka, for Tom and Harryette, and for Ceej and Bella, who disappear into the place of emergence, but readers are more likely to want a solid ending and the answers to some questions (does Bella die of the flu she's contracted? What happens to Tim and Harryette?) than ineffable mysteries. There's still some atmospheric action and philosophical explorations here, and some young adults may find it provocative. DS

HEARNE, BETSY *Wishes, Kisses, and Pigs*. McElderry, 2001 133p
ISBN 0-689-84122-1 \$16.00

Gr. 4-7

[Note: Books by *Bulletin* staff are given a descriptive annotation rather than a review and code rating.]

Louise's reckless wish on an evening star sets off a chain of events involving a forlorn pig, a persistent suitor, and a broken enchantment in this Babbitt-like fantasy. JMD

HOGEWEG, MARGRIET *The God of Grandma Forever*; tr. by Nancy Forest-Flier. Front Street, 2001 [112p]
ISBN 1-886910-69-3 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 3-5

Grandma Forever (she's going to live forever because she's ninety-three years old, hence the name) comes to Maria's house to live in the attic that used to be Maria's special place. The resentful child and her demanding paternal grandmother develop a relationship based on family and Bible stories and on the fact that *Grandma Forever* will answer any question (no matter how personal) with the candor of old age. The text implies that Maria's parents are not religious; Maria herself, however, has her own sort of faith, including belief in the afterlife (she visits her maternal grandmother's grave often, for solace and conversation). *Grandma Forever* is less of a comfort, however: she and Maria clash and collude (including one escape where granddaughter takes grandmother to school as the subject of an oral report), and the tensions of having a persnickety elderly relation living at home are credibly evoked. Maria's observations about her world and the people in it are based on a combination of empirical evidence and imaginative faith. The tone of this novel (translated from the Dutch) is somewhat subdued despite the often-

humorous content, and much of the action is understated. The stylistically unadorned text is reminiscent of Swedish author Maria Gripe (*Julia's House*, BCCB 3/75) in its blunt honesty. While peripheral characters are a bit sketchy, Grandma and Maria are drawn in bold lines, and readers will find them memorable. JMD

HOOBLER, DOROTHY *The Demon in the Teahouse*; by Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler. Philomel, 2001 [208p]

ISBN 0-399-23499-3 \$17.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 6-9

This stand-alone sequel is a worthy successor to the Hooblers' *The Ghost of the Tokaido Inn* (BCCB 9/99) as legendary Judge Ooka and his fictional adopted son Seikei once again bring justice to eighteenth-century Japan. A string of arsons and the murders of three young women seem to be related, and Ooka sends Seikei to the Teahouse of the Falling Cherry Blossoms to observe and report on the movements of staff and clientele. Seikei obtains employment as a menial worker and, crouching in the background, begins to link fires and deaths to the eminent geisha Umae, who entertains a host of her admirers each evening. As in any good murder mystery, no solution is simple, and a tangle of twists and turns finds Seikei fighting for his life in a climactic rooftop battle with the real villain. Ooka remains a powerful and dignified behind-the-scenes presence, quietly wielding the political clout necessary to keep an investigation moving while acting as intellectual mentor to his would-be samurai son. Seikei is indeed a headstrong adolescent who makes his share of heedless mistakes, but he's also a keen observer and able logician who strives in all his actions to become worthy of rising to samurai status. The Hooblers fashion not only a topnotch mystery but an engrossing tour of the "floating world" Yoshiwara, where delicately adorned geishas hold powerful politicians in thrall and where even the blameless pursue their midnight pleasures in disguise. EB

HOPKINSON, DEBORAH *Fannie in the Kitchen*; illus. by Nancy Carpenter. Schwartz/Atheneum, 2001 34p

ISBN 0-689-81965-X \$16.00

R Gr. 2-4

The Fannie of the title is Fannie Farmer, innovator of cooking science who established the convention of specific measurement, but this story takes place before she earned that fame. Here she's staying with the Shaw family as a mother's helper because Mrs. Shaw is expecting a new baby, leaving young Marcia Shaw's nose out of joint. Marcia is seduced, however, by the pleasures of working in the kitchen with Fannie, learning how to bake biscuits, flip pancakes, and check for rotten eggs, and Fannie finally puts her good information down in specific and informative notes that Marcia may follow on her own. Fannie's fame spreads, and she finally leaves the Shaws to take a job at the Boston Cookery School while Marcia makes sure her cooking lives on at the Shaw house. Hopkinson's sprightly narrative is well-measured itself, divided into courses rather than chapters; Marcia is an effective center for the narrative, making it light and tasty rather than merely nutritious, and there's the occasional dash of zesty humor in her point of view (Marcia finds Mother's obsession with the new baby "disgusting"). The illustrations are an ingenious blend of line-and-watercolor and period engravings, bits of which are inserted into the artwork and colored along with it. Carpenter makes Fannie a composed, agreeably sharp-featured miss, while Marcia is a rich little dish in her corkscrew-curled hair and perky ribbon; subdued colors suit the hand-tinted look,

and imaginative details are occasionally startling (one pan of cake balances on Marcia's head, Marcia's proper mother is caught licking her plate at the breakfast table) but nonetheless amusing and telling. Ironically, the pancake recipe at the end is a little short on information (how do you test the grill heat? How many people does this recipe feed?), but it really doesn't matter. Fannie's good literary company, and her impact is assuredly underestimated; why not link this to some dramatic in-class demonstrations of the utility of specific measurements? A brief note (though no bibliography or information for further reading) is included. DS

HOWARD, GINGER *William's House*; illus. by Larry Day. Millbrook, 2001 32p
ISBN 0-7613-1674-4\$22.95 Ad 5-8 yrs

The scene is colonial New England in the spring, circa 1637, and colonist William is determined to build a house "like the house he grew up in, his father's house, in England." He builds a one-room house with few amenities for his wife and their two sons. In August he digs a cellar; in October he replaces the thatch on the flat roof with cedar shingles; in November he changes the flat roof to a pitched roof, to offset the weight of the snow; in January he builds a new fireplace; come spring the family welcomes cousins newly arrived from England. The building process is oversimplified, leaving questions that neither text nor pictures address (replacing a roof while it snows and building a new fireplace in the dead of winter are questionable choices at best). Full-page paintings faithfully reflect the main action, while half-page pen-and-ink drawings feature William's two sons engaged in seasonal activities. Foreshortened and disproportionate figures mar the color compositions, in contrast to the more precise drafting of the black-and-white art. The book's overall impression is that the challenges of colonial life consisted of easily overcome difficulties. The ending is abrupt, and only the liner notes indicate that the point of the story is that life in the New World means letting go of the old ways. Nevertheless, an adult with background knowledge of colonial lifeways will find this a useful title for introducing kindergartners and primary graders to historical New England. JMD

JANECZKO, PAUL B., comp. *Dirty Laundry Pile: Poems in Different Voices*; illus. by Melissa Sweet. HarperCollins, 2001 [40p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-688-16252-5 \$15.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-16251-7 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 2-4

The "different voices" of the subtitle may sound like a standard characteristic of an anthology, but in fact it's referring to the voices of the poetic subjects themselves—this is a collection of poems where the usually voiceless get their time in the narrative spotlight. Speakers include a scarecrow ("Scarecrow's Dream" by Nina Nyhart), a household appliance ("The Vacuum Cleaner's Revenge" by Patricia Hubbell), and plant roots ("Roots," by Madeleine Comora), as well as a covey of critters ranging from a mosquito (in Peggy B. Leavitt's "The Mosquito's Song") to a cat (in Carmen Bernos de Gasztold's "The Prayer of the Cat"). While entries from poets such as Lilian Moore and Douglas Florian may be familiar, they take on a different tone in this company, and many poems here will be new to readers. The tone is light throughout but never cheap—the verses are sharp and deft, some lyrical (" . . . Or better yet, I hope/ for my swirling journey to end instantly/ on the hot tongue/ of some shivering child . . ."—Cynthia Pederson's "Prayer of a Snow-

flake”) or comic (“I am a young bacterium/ And I enjoy my work . . .”—John Collis’ “Job Satisfaction”). Sweet’s watercolors are somewhat more quirky than usual, with some of the playful eccentricity of Brian Karas’ work, and the animals in particular have a slightly skewed charm. There are plenty of possibilities here for performance as well as reading aloud (by kids as well as to them), not to mention the simple pleasures of browsing; whatever the nature of the encounter, this is sure to elicit some surprising sympathy for the previously unconsidered. DS

JANECZKO, PAUL B., comp. *A Poke in the I: A Collection of Concrete Poems*; illus. by Chris Raschka. Candlewick, 2001 35p
ISBN 0-7636-0661-8 \$15.99

R Gr. 4-7

See this month’s Big Picture, p. 365, for review.

KELLY, MIJ *William and the Night Train*; illus. by Alison Jay. Farrar, 2001 26p
ISBN 0-374-38437-1 \$16.00

R 2-5 yrs

William is one of the few passengers on the night train who will not go to sleep (“he’s switched on like a light./ He wants to get to Tomorrow in the middle of the night”). After he’s romped all over the train, William’s mother shares a trick with him to help the time pass, telling him to close his eyes and be quiet, and he dozes off. Kelly’s story is simple, and her soothing verse will lull listeners to sleep. Jay’s softly surrealistic illustrations complement the tone of the text perfectly, showing a wide-eyed William in a hurry to get to tomorrow while the grownups around him settle into the seats to rest. Endpapers and border spaces are populated by pillow-like sheep which eventually make their way into the main space of the picture, placidly grazing in a field as the night train speeds by, and William rides in the night sky on a puffy sheep-cloud of steam from the train’s engine. Design is outstanding, as when the train moves right-to-left on the last page, creating an elegant ending to all the left-to-right movement. Despite the lack of plot, the detailed illustrations (in which readers can literally count sheep) and the gentle poetry make this a solid bedtime story. Climb aboard. KM

KINSEY-WARNOCK, NATALIE *A Farm of Her Own*; illus. by Kathleen Kolb. Dutton, 2001 32p
ISBN 0-525-46507-3 \$15.99

Ad 4-8 yrs

Town girl Emma not only adjusts to summers on Great Uncle Will’s Vermont farm, she fully embraces farm life—its predictable round of chores, the comforting sounds, the closeness of animals, the satisfaction of homegrown fruits and vegetables. While her cousins plan to become doctors or scientists or teachers, Emma shyly confides to Aunt Ada, “I want to be a farmer—like you.” Her dream is a long time in coming. When Will and Ada pass away, the farm is sold out of the family. An opportunity finally presents itself to adult Emma, however, and she and her husband purchase the rundown property and reestablish the family homestead. In an age of disappearing small farms, this optimistic tale seems imbued with wishful thinking; although Kinsey-Warnock dedicates this to her own farmer relatives Will and Ada (and, according to flap data, the author and her husband still live on the family’s land), there’s no evidence that contemporary city dwellers take up pastoral life quite so easily. Kolb’s watercolor scenes confer a romantic glow on sun-washed fields, star-dotted nights, charmingly posed fauna (although old Jack, the horse,

changes dimension most alarmingly), and a relentlessly smiling cast, yet they're oddly drained of emotion. Viewers whose dreams are made of green fields and a bright red barn may nonetheless appreciate the unabashed affection Emma holds for the land. EB

LASKY, KATHRYN *Interrupted Journey: Saving Endangered Sea Turtles*; illus. with photographs by Christopher G. Knight. Candlewick, 2001 42p
ISBN 0-7636-0635-9 \$16.99 R Gr. 4-6

Beginning with the rescue of a Kemp's ridley turtle on the coast of Cape Cod one cold November day, Lasky tells the story of the tenuous nature of the lives of sea turtles and of human efforts to save them from extinction. Thematically titled sections divide the text ("Stranded," "Emergency," "Risky Life," "Release," and "Miracles") as the turtle dubbed Yellow-Blue (from the color of his new tracking tag) is first transported to the New England Aquarium and then, after a ride on a cargo jet, released into the Gulf Waters with the assistance of Richie Moretti's Turtle Hospital. The book includes a panoply of turtle facts (a turtle nest may include 100 eggs, the population of Kemp's ridleys had decreased from 40,000 to 2,500 in less than fifty years), an interesting contrast between joint individual and institutional efforts to assist the turtles, and a map of turtle migration (though the intent is slightly unclear: why would Yellow-Blue be placed back into the Gulf Stream, only to be swept to Cape Cod again?). Knight's impressive photography captures the gritty details of turtle rescue as well as the nobility of the species. Lasky's respect and enthusiasm for her subject is clear, and the text will leave readers more aware of human roles in species' extinction and preservation. Pair this with George Ancona's *Turtle Watch* (BCCB 10/87) for some testudine fun. EAB

LENER, CAROL *On the Wing: American Birds in Migration*; written and illus. by Carol Lerner. HarperCollins, 2001 [48p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-16650-4 \$16.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-16649-0 \$16.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-8

The picture-book format and trim size may not instantly attract middle-schoolers, but the information in Lerner's study is thorough and challenging enough to expand a science unit or engross a novice bird watcher. Alternating spreads introduce an aspect of migration (e.g. "Finding the Way," "Timing the Journey") and focus on one or two species of birds that demonstrate a particular pattern or behavior (mountain chickadees and blue grouse that migrate altitudinally; crossbills and snowy owls that only migrate when food supply and demand on their home turf is thrown off balance). Lerner is particularly effective in explaining relationships between a bird's physiology and its need and capacity for migration and in describing the methods scientists use to collect migration data and observe bird behavior. Spacious design allows plenty of room for detailed illustrations and helpful inset maps displaying migration zones (although vermilion flycatcher and snowy owl maps don't match the text as exactly as one might like); substantial chunks of information seem far less daunting when packaged in spreads with white space to spare. It would be a shame to relegate this volume to junior-high report writers; perhaps there are some beginner adult birdwatchers who'd appreciate a crash course in ornithology. EB

LET'S COUNT THE RAINDROPS; illus. by Fumi Kosaka. Viking, 2001 24p
ISBN 0-670-89689-6 \$15.99 R 2-5 yrs

Ten short, cheerful verses about weather from John Ciardi ("Wouldn't You?"), Aileen Fisher ("June!"), Christina Rossetti ("Clouds"), Margaret Wise Brown ("The Leaves Fall Down"), and others make up this poetry collection for the youngest listener. Acrylic paintings on gessoed canvas achieve a nubbly finish that adds texture to the very simple geometric shapes that make up the uncluttered compositions. The little girl who romps through the pages with her dog no matter what the weather is composed of triangles and half circles; her simple dot-eyes and angular nose are surprisingly expressive. The stylized but child-friendly images include happy smiling faces on the sun and sunflowers, sheep-shaped clouds, and laughing frogs. Listeners (and beginning readers, too) will appreciate the verve of this easy verse. JMD

LEWIS, J. PATRICK *Good Mousekeeping and Other Animal Home Poems*; illus. by Lisa Desimini. Schwartz/Atheneum, 2001 32p
ISBN 0-689-83161-7 \$16.00 Ad Gr. 2-4

Seventeen brief rhymes aim for the whimsical in their descriptions of animals' imaginary abodes: "Oh, where would a Flamingo go?/ She'd go to a Flamingolow,/ A flaming hot pink bungalow/ Beside the steamy jungle-o." The rhymes run from two to four to eight lines long, and, although their quality is uneven, some are pithy and funny ("The house a Skunk would call a home a-/ Rises through a thick aroma") and have vague echoes of Douglas Florian's work. Unfortunately, the lengthy opening and closing verses that bracket the assortment of rhymes are forced and awkward, and give the collection a contrived air. Desimini's mixed-media illustrations, however, have a warped charm and twisted whimsicality that makes them both surprising and appealing. The compositions feature far from realistic animals in far from realistic settings; young readers may be inspired to invent a few imaginary domiciles of their own. JMD

LILLEGARD, DEE *Hello School!: A Classroom Full of Poems*; illus. by Don Carter. Knopf, 2001 [26p]
ISBN 0-375-81020-X \$14.95
Reviewed from galleys R 3-5 yrs

There are fictional titles aplenty to drive away the creeps from tots heading off for that mysterious institution, School. Lillegard (author of *Wake Up, House!*, BCCB 2/00) takes a lighter-handed, but equally therapeutic, approach, offering tiny poems that highlight the realia of the preschool domain and make the coming experience concrete and manageable. Not all her verses scale the heights of poetic brilliance ("Scissors": "Open shut/ Open shut/ A snippy pair,/ they're quick to cut"), but many are quite pithy indeed ("Crayon": "Starts out tall/ with a fine pointed head./ Never grows up . . . / grows down instead"). Carter's classroom accoutrements, rendered in foam board and plaster, conjure the homely familiarity of modeling clay, and the textures and colors of the mixed-media illustrations compensate for the occasionally cluttered compositions. Even before the first line of text is delivered, children will recognize that they're on comfortable turf, with an overflowing wastebasket that could be in the bedroom corner and a slide and swing set that could be at the neighborhood park. From the banana-mouth, earmuff-eyed face that grins welcome from the wooden cubby to the rhythm band instruments that

promise lots of noisy mayhem, school looks like a place that no kid in his/her right mind would want to miss. EB

LIVINGSTONE, STAR *Harley*; illus. by Molly Bang. SeaStar, 2001 [64p]

Library ed. ISBN 1-58717-049-3 \$14.88

Trade ed. ISBN 1-58717-048-5 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 2-3

Harley is a llama with issues: he screams, he spits, he kicks, and he doesn't get along with the other llamas. These character flaws do not keep a shepherd from buying Harley to guard her sheep from coyotes, however, and Harley adapts to his new home on a modern sheep ranch with surprising alacrity ("In the morning the shepherd returns. Everything is settled. Harley is guarding the sheep. They are his sheep now. The field is his field. What happened? Only Harley and the sheep know"). Details of ranch life contained in the simple nonfiction text and mixed-media art will capture children and provoke conversation. The text is sometimes choppy, but the accumulation of events involving Harley, the coyotes, and the sheep will keep the pages turning. Richly hued and textured illustrations add depth to the easy-reader-type format. Pictures of Harley spitting grain at a troublesome ram, peering in the sheep-shed window to greet the new lambs, and sprawling on the ground, prostrate (and grinning) in the heat nimbly evoke his personality. (The human figures are less cleanly rendered, but this isn't really their story.) Curricular connections will be easily made, and Harley himself is an endearing (if ornery) character. JMD

MACY, SUE, ed. *Girls Got Game: Sports Stories & Poems*. Holt, 2001 152p

ISBN 0-8050-6568-7 \$15.95

Ad Gr. 5-8

There are probably more girls who embrace pain, sweat, and in-your-face competition than there are girls' sport stories to satisfy them; here Macy has assembled a couple of fistfuls of tales and poems to redress the disparity. Besides the predictable girls on the diamond and girls on the basketball court, readers also meet girls into tetherball, horsemanship, synchronized swimming, and even tackle football. However, apart from this impressive range of sport, the collection is somewhat programmatic, with a girl-has-problem, sport-saves-girl theme dominating throughout. Jacqueline Woodson's darker, edgier entry "Beanie," in which the queen of her street stickball team is elbowed out of the game when an all-male league is formed, shines as an exception. Poems are earnest but pedestrian, from the clumsily mixed metaphor of Nancy Boutlier's "The Rhythm of the Strong" ("I am just one link/ in this eight woman spine" to Grace Butcher's breathless tribute "Soccer" ("We love our bodies,/ how strong they are, our legs, the way/ our thighs and calves ripple in the sun"). While these tales can't match the muscle of a great girls sports novel such as Virginia Euwer Wolff's *Bat 6* (BCCB 6/98), athletes whose tight practice schedules leave little time for leisure reading will appreciate these quick takes on their fictional team sisters. EB

McKELVEY, DOUGLAS KAINE *Locust Pocus!: A Book to Bug You*; illus. by Richard Egielski. Philomel, 2001 32p

ISBN 0-399-23452-7 \$15.99

R 5-9 yrs

What with Douglas Florian's *Insectlopedia* (BCCB 7/98) and Paul Fleischman's *Joyful Noise* (2/88), this sequence of insect verse is in good company; the approach

here, however, is even chirpier and more bite-sized, with each insect receiving a quick couplet before the poetry darts off to the next subject. The reach is broad, buzzing from bees to June bugs and scuttling from cockroaches to the lowly louse. Even the weakest of the poems are entertaining, and at their best they deftly deliver nifty sound effects ("Crafty crickets/ perch on pickets,/ chirp on porches, hide in thickets") or pleasing puns ("The praying mantis/ prays for prey"). Egielski's watercolors, in full-page and spot art, have a *Bug's Life* flavor to their anthropomorphism, and with their jaunty demeanors and limpid bug eyes the insects quite outshine the occasional human. Creepy and crawly and eminently browsable, this conglomeration offers lively opportunities for readalouds, readalones, and occasional solicitations of squeamish squeals. DS

MEAD, ALICE *Girl of Kosovo*. Farrar, 2001 113p
ISBN 0-374-32620-7 \$16.00

R Gr. 4-8

Informative but bearable, this "based on a true story" account of one contemporary ethnic Albanian family is narrated by eleven-year-old Zana, who has grown up in Yugoslavia under the "emergency law" imposed by Milosevic in 1989. She and her family are rural villagers, traditional but also in touch with global modernity (they watch Venezuelan soap operas and Italian racing on television). During the war between the military and the Kosova Liberation Army rebels in 1998, they experience catastrophic losses: a mortar shell kills Zana's father and her two younger brothers, and Zana herself is gravely wounded in the leg. From that point on, the novel gives a lot of attention to how Zana's recovery is affected by Serb-dominated hospitals and sporadic international relief efforts; the story ends soon after the NATO-imposed peace, when Zana returns from the hospital to her village, where her family is living in a tent. Her remaining brother (who barely escaped death at the hand of Serb soldiers) leads an attack on some privileged Serb neighbors, but he is stopped by Zana, who still sees the daughter of the house as a friend. In a little over 100 pages, Mead, the author of another novel about Kosovo (*Adem's Cross*, BCCB 1/97), bears witness to the pain and isolation of children, as when Zana views a Serb friend and wishes "something bad would happen to her so she would know how I felt." The novel itself, however, does not make its point by traumatizing readers: the terror and the tense tedium of this modern war is conveyed flatly: "My father and the tractor were destroyed. . . . Burim, too, had been destroyed by the blast. I can't describe his body." Its effectiveness for American readers lies in the clarity of presentation (a foreword gives additional context), bolstered by experiential details (and brand-name products) that connect children across the world. FK

MEYERS, SUSAN *Everywhere Babies*; illus. by Marla Frazee. Harcourt, 2001 [32p]
ISBN 0-15-202226-0 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R 1-4 yrs

Meyers offers this rhyming paean to babies: "Every day, everywhere, babies are born—fat babies, thin babies, small babies, tall babies, winter and spring babies, summer and fall babies./ Every day, everywhere, babies are kissed—on their cheeks, on their ears, their fingers, their nose, on the top of their head, on their tummy, their toes." Granted, the repetitive form and the content here aren't unique, but the text has a jolly bounceability in its solid evocation of the events in a bunch o'

babies' day. Frazee's pencil and watercolor depictions of that bunch is what make this title worthwhile; babies of all sizes, colors, and demeanors, engaged in all manner of activities, romp, roam, and wriggle through the pages. Precise drafting and plenty of action typify each spread. Toddlers are very fond of looking at pictures of other younglings; this is one of those books that, though short on text, will be a look-and-point lapsit hit. JMD

OLALEYE, ISAAC *Bikes for Rent!*; illus. by Chris Demarest. Orchard, 2001 [32p]
ISBN 0-531-30290-3 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

Lateef lives in a "finger-shaped village called Erin in the rain forest of western Nigeria." The boy is anxious to earn the money to rent a bicycle from Babatunde, the bicycle man, and to that end he gathers mushrooms and firewood and sells them in the market. When he has the money he rents—and learns to ride—an old bicycle; soon he rides well enough for Babatunde to rent him a "new, big red bike with a high and straight seat." When Lateef has an accident and damages the bike, he works for the good-natured bicycle man to pay for repairs. Babatunde teaches Lateef to rebuild and repair bicycles, and Lateef stays on to earn the money for a new bike. Lateef's desire for a bicycle will be easily understood by young listeners, and his delight in being able to join his friends as they do tricks on their bicycles while whooshing down a steep hill adds immediacy to the action. Olaleye writes with irresistible enthusiasm, and he captures the energy of the boys, the generosity of Babatunde, and the determination of Lateef in a few well-chosen incidents that show more than tell. The comfortably rounded shapes of the characters dominate the open watercolor compositions. Subtle earth-toned backgrounds set off the white shirts of Lateef and Babatunde, making them the center of attention on each page. Friendly, effective storytelling and easy-to-see images will make this a readaloud favorite. JMD

ORGILL, ROXANE *Shout, Sister, Shout!: Ten Girl Singers Who Shaped a Century*. McElderry, 2001 [168p] illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-689-81991-9 \$18.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 7-10

The chapters in this collective biography are organized chronologically by twentieth-century decade, and featured singers include Sophie Tucker, Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Ethel Merman, Judy Garland, Anita O'Day, Joan Baez, Bette Midler, Madonna, and Lucinda Williams (who, along with Wynonna Judd and LeAnn Rimes, represents the 1990s). The writing is chatty with an air of assumed intimacy (Orgill casually refers to the "girl singers" by their first names throughout); biographical and career information about each woman includes unsourced quotes from the women themselves and from their contemporaries. Quotations including racial epithets and misogynistic language, while true to the eras being discussed, require more context than Orgill is able to provide in these brief biographies in order to make them as understandable as they are shocking. Sidebars provide historical background on and definitions of topics such as Vaudeville, silent movies, the blues, improvisation, folk songs, etc. A "What's New" section about the impact of technological advancements (FM radio, television, CDs, etc.) is included in nearly every chapter, as is a sidebar that describes the changing fashions each woman wore during her career. A CD discography, bibliography, and index are included. JMD

PIERCE, TAMORA *The Circle Opens: Street Magic*. Scholastic, 2001 300p
ISBN 0-590-39628-5 \$16.95 R Gr. 5-9

Briar Moss, current green mage and former street urchin, is visiting the city of Chammuri with his mentor, Rosethorn, when he discovers a young girl working stone magic in the marketplace. The girl, Evvy, flees Briar and his curious questions, but his subsequent investigation reveals she is a runaway slave living on the streets, making a meager living by magically polishing semiprecious stones. Complications arise when Briar becomes embroiled in a war among rival street gangs, a war instigated by bored noblewoman Lady Zenadia, mastermind of the Vipers gang, who not only wants to control the streets but wants to control Evvy and her magic as well. This second entry in the *Circle Opens* series has the cohesion lacking in the first volume (*The Circle Opens: Magic Steps*, BCCB 3/00). The action is fast and furious, and characterizations are precise (the reformed Briar is an engaging rogue, and Evvy is a streetwise, sympathetic, and resourceful individual). The final confrontation between Briar and Lady Zenadia after she kidnaps Evvy has the pounding pace of a *Die Hard* finale; the fact that Evvy engineers her own escape from Zenadia's clutches will leave readers more than satisfied. JMD

PIERCE, TAMORA *Protector of the Small: Squire*. Random House, 2001 [416p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-679-98916-1 \$17.99
Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-88916-7 \$15.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 7-10

In the third novel about Keladry of Mindelan (see BCCB 9/00 and 7/99), Pierce's heroine becomes squire to Raoul of Goldenlake, Knight Commander of the King's Own Guard. The author treads familiar ground here ("girl overcomes gender barriers by being better than the boys" has pretty much been the theme of the last two books) but rather than repeat the predictable, successful patterns of the previous titles in the series, Pierce (who, in her acknowledgments, thanks J. K. Rowling for proving to publishers that kids will read longer books) has one hundred extra pages in which to develop both characters and story. She extends the scene dramatically: an apparently unstoppable enemy gathers at the border, the struggle for the monarchy gains intensity, and Keladry's vision in the Chamber of Ordeal (her last test of knighthood) reveals the horrendous evil she is to fight. Keladry ages from fourteen to seventeen in the course of the novel, and her rites of passage are duly noted: first love, sexual awakening (she doesn't actually have sex but she does prepare for it), and war bring new wisdom to the determined young woman. Despite a prominent romantic interest, this novel is by and large an adventure story. Strong imagery anchors the action; the pace is quick, and the conclusion is promising. Unfortunate cover art makes the maturing Keladry appear much too young to attract the intended audience, but a quick booktalk should fix that. Idealistic Keladry has guts, and strong foreshadowing indicates that, in the next book, she'll need them. JMD

PINKWATER, DANIEL *Fat Camp Commandos*; illus. by Andy Rash. Scholastic, 2001 89p
ISBN 0-439-15527-4 \$14.95 R Gr. 3-6

Brother and sister Ralph and Sylvia have been sent to Camp Noo Yoo, a kiddie farm, for the summer by their plump parents. Once there they meet Mavis Goldfarb, a sharp and savvy kid who is furious at her archaeologist parents for sending her to

the camp against her will. The three campers plot escape and revenge: they elude supervision, hop a bus home, and set up camp at Mavis' secluded mansion (conveniently empty of her parents, who are off searching for fossils). The jolly ex-campers become Fat Commandos, and their acts of sabotage include verbal assaults on the skinny, artistic alteration of anorexic models on billboards and exposure of a self-proclaimed "formerly fat" diet doctor who was never even pleasingly plump. Short chapters and easy, funny language are a Pinkwater trademark, and fans of his previous works will feel right at home here. Amidst the mayhem the author includes some discreet and heartening advice for the unhappily dieting: at the site of a potential commando raid, Dr. Deepdip Cha-cha remarks "Getting some extra exercise is probably the best thing you can do. . . . And most important, don't get tricked into hating the way you look. The people who tell you that you have to be thin to be a happy person are either idiots, or they're trying to sell you something that isn't going to work anyway." While the plot is contrived and the staccato chapters lack cohesion, Pinkwater has the diet-industry lingo down cold. Diet books, weight-loss gurus, and appearance-obsessed media all get their turn on Pinkwater's punny pillory. Rash's full- and half-page black-and-white cartoons feature pudgy protagonists gleefully taking on the thin and judgmental. JMD

POWELL, RANDY *Run If You Dare*. Farrar, 2001 [192p]

ISBN 0-374-39981-6 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 7-10

Often oblivious to the world around him, fourteen-year-old Gardner is seemingly unaware of his father's inability to get a job and his resulting depression. Money is short, Mom's salary is barely enough, the family dynamic is tense, and Gardner begins to get a small inkling of his father's rising desperation. His older sister Lacey reveals her bitter thoughts about their potential ("People like you and me . . . we're not meant to be hotshots. We're not meant for greatness. You're going to hit smack up against that wall soon enough. The wall of breeding and heredity. The wall of limitation. The world is going to put you in your true place"), causing Gardner to take a closer look at his father's lost dreams and his own personal ambitions. There's a lot of free-floating angst in this novel, along with extensive dialogue that explicates characters' feelings, but there is little action. The resolution to Gardner's emotional quandary (he is burdened with Dad's revelation that he intends to abandon the family and start anew) is anticlimactic and his decision to "take his life and run with it," while heartening, is somewhat contrived. The humor that made Powell's previous titles (*Tribute to Another Dead Rock Star*, BCCB 4/99, *The Whistling Toilets*, 11/96) fizz is often flat here, and the momentum is slowed by the protagonist's low-energy interior monologues. Gardner is a dispassionate narrator but that actually works for him; his sometimes ambivalent self-reflection just may strike a chord with readers in a similar state of adolescent stasis. JMD

RATCLIFFE, JANE *The Free Fall*. Holt, 2001 [352p]

ISBN 0-8050-6667-5 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 9-12

Shortly after her sixteenth birthday, Violet, known as Let, meets sexy nineteen-year-old Henry. She's ensnared by his slow, cool sensuality, and she manages to evoke some interest—or perhaps just sexual opportunism—in him. Meanwhile,

there's Ryder, the sweet cowboy kid stuck at a local boarding school, who shares Let's philosophical questionings and appeals to her emotionally and intellectually ("I liked Ryder. I really did, but it was like something inside of me wouldn't let me like him all the way"). While ricocheting between the two, Let dulls her uncertainty with drugs (Henry is amply supplied with coke) and booze (Ryder carries a flask), crawling home at all hours to her ineffectual and embattled parents. Just when she finally realizes that Henry is a dead-end for her and casts her lot in with Ryder, she's hit with a family-rocking tragedy. Ratcliffe is a talented stylist, and she's given Let a credible voice, especially as she grapples with the mystery of human dynamics and destiny ("That was one thing that always confused me in life—how to separate individuals from their beliefs"); there's a hard and serious edge to the picture of adolescent entropy and the moment-to-moment, incredibly foolish decisions (though Let is wise enough at least to stick to safe sex). The book's general architecture, however, doesn't support its substantial length. Though the unhurried and meandering pace effectively convey Let's imprisonment in her troubled life, there's an awful lot of book at a slow speed; Let seems as troubled at the beginning and middle as at the end, so the foreshadowings and flashbacks don't really have much contrast or impact. Though the book is (inexplicably) set in 1994, it paints a picture that will be familiar to many young people today leading lives of which their parents have little knowledge. DS

RAU, MARGARET *The Wells Fargo Book of the Gold Rush*. Atheneum, 2001 143p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-689-83019-X \$18.00 R Gr. 5-9

Certainly other authors have taken on the California Gold Rush, but Rau scores extra points for her smooth narrative and breadth of coverage. The romantic lure of gold and the frenzy it inspired are seamlessly integrated with such issues as transportation, mining methods, camp booms and busts, collateral business ventures, life in the mining towns, and final playing out of the lodes and the national recession of 1854. Primary source materials from the Wells Fargo archives—from business records to period illustrations—lend firsthand authenticity and a novel slant on events. A typographical error dates the establishment of Sacramento as state capital in 1954 (1854); nearly exclusive focus on the experiences of white Forty Niners (minorities only receive cursory treatment) tends to gloss over the challenges and contributions of others who pursued the same dream. Jerry Stanley provides a partial remedy in *Hurry Freedom: African-Americans in Gold Rush California* (BCCB 1/01), though, and together these titles offer a solid middle-school introduction. A bibliography and index are included. EB

RINALDI, ANN *Girl in Blue*. Scholastic, 2001 310 p
ISBN 0-439-07336-7 \$15.95

Ad Gr. 6-9

War looks a lot better to Sarah Wheelock than marriage to boorish widower Ezekiel Kunkel, and since she's already quite handy with a Winchester, she chops off her curls and passes herself off to the not-too-particular Union recruiter as Neddy Compton. "Neddy's" first assignment keeps her in the safety of a Washington hospital, assisting Dr. Hammond, but eventually the 2nd Michigan is off to Manassas, and in the bloodbath at Bull Run. Sarah is separated from her regiment and she makes her way back to Washington. A brief mission behind the enemy lines proves her mettle to ranking officers, but it also inadvertently blows her cover; she's drummed out of the service but referred to Allan Pinkerton, who runs an

espionage ring. Sarah is assigned to infiltrate the home of society matron Rose Greenhow, and although immediate physical dangers are somewhat diminished on this front, Sarah's heart is in considerable peril from the attention of handsome guard Sheldon, who may or may not share her loyalty to the Union. Sarah's masquerade in the Army of the Potomac, which is fraught with more excitement than her subsequent turn as a spy, comes off with surprising ease, and her stay at "Fort Greenhow" (as operatives dub the site) isn't quite the nail-biter readers might wish. However, Rinaldi has an undeniable knack for weaving romance into history, and Sarah's simultaneous attraction to and mistrust of Sheldon is convincingly portrayed. Rinaldi's many fans probably agree that her novels, even when not quite at peak, are nonetheless reliably entertaining, and they'll welcome this new title accordingly. EB

RODDA, EMILY *Rowan of Rin*. Greenwillow, 2001 151p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-029708-5 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-029707-7 \$14.95

Ad Gr. 3-5

Timid Rowan is the keeper of the bukshah (large, ox-like creatures) for his village, Rin. His quiet days among the unthreatening domestic beasts suit him, and he longs for nothing more than an uneventful life. When the river that waters Rin ceases to flow, the villagers decide to send a band of their best and bravest up the dragon-guarded mountain to discover the cause. Old Sheba, the only one among them who knows the way, names young Rowan one of the troupe of seven who must make the difficult and dangerous journey. In order to guarantee his participation in the quest, she gives the troupe a map that can only be read when Rowan holds it in his hands. On the journey five of the questors are met and defeated by their worst fears, and, one by one, they each turn back. Only Rowan and Strong Jonn remain to complete the quest and save their people. The pacing is unfortunately uneven—the opening pages spend too much time on the still-vague setup—and the conclusion is much too quickly resolved. However, once the journey begins, the action is quick and the dangers just enough to be creepily terrifying. Overall, the characters are sketchy, but the conflicted Rowan is a heart-grabber, and his final act of courage in confronting the dragon is completely believable. The perspective is a bit too adult (aside from Rowan, the troupe members are grownups with adult fears and concerns), and much is implied but little is clarified about the society itself. Still, this first volume in Rodda's series about Rowan of Rin may appeal to younger readers looking to ease into more complex fare, and they will appreciate Rowan's dogged determination to act in spite of his fears. JMD

ROSALES, MELODY BENSON *The Adventures of Minnie: Minnie Saves the Day*; written and illus. by Melody Benson Rosales. Little, 2001 [96p]

ISBN 0-316-75605-9 \$12.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 4-7 yrs

Minnie is a brown-skinned rag doll given to Hester May by her Grandmama Alfie, who uses bits and pieces of cloth from family clothes (and family history) to make her. When the energetic Hester finally goes to sleep, Minnie and the other toys have a nighttime confabulation: good-hearted Minnie meets the snooty Prima Donna, the Grumpy Old Bear, and the helpful Waddle Waddle, the wooden pull-toy duck. Minnie and Scruffy (a stuffed rabbit with a broken music box that makes him a "used-to-be" favorite toy) join forces to "save the day" when Hester's

mother burns a butter pound cake meant for dessert. This nostalgic story is set in the 1933 African-American Bronzeville neighborhood of Chicago, and historical references abound: Hester's father is a Pullman porter, her older sister is a member of the Bud Billiken Club (a club for African-American children still in existence in Chicago today), and her babysitter, Mrs. Morgan, listens to soap operas on the radio. Awkward phrasing and rhyming dialogue mar the text, but the combination of the activities of the human characters and the secret life of the talking toys is still appealing. The watercolors feature bright-eyed, expressive people in an idealized setting lit by a golden glow; the toys are sometimes rendered in a slick soft-focus that adds to the sentiment of an already overly sentimental tale. A concluding section entitled "Chocolate-Covered Memories" gives pertinent historical information about the Bronzeville community and the rest of American society à la the Dear America series, and it includes captioned sepia photographs, brief biographical sketches of famous African Americans, and quotes from individuals who lived in Bronzeville during the 1930s. JMD

ROTNER, SHELLEY *Parts*; written and illus. with photographs by Shelley Rotner. Walker, 2001 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-8027-8754-1 \$17.85

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8027-8753-3 \$16.95

Ad 2-4 yrs

In a reversal of her concept in *Nature Spy*, Rotner shares picture clues and rhymed riddles ("What's bright yellow, with seats in rows/ Up and down the streets it goes"), urging the reader to guess the object described ("Red lights flash when it stops for us/ climb on board the big SCHOOL BUS"). Subjects range from flowers ("Petals on top,/ leaves down below"), to a dog ("A tongue to lick, a tail to wag"), and finally, a home ("Climb up the steps, one, two, three, four . . . I always return after I roam/ To the place where I live—my house, my HOME"), and a child's body ("A head on top and legs below/ All my parts will grow and grow"). Rotner's vivid photographs occasionally lack clarity of focus, but they evince a range of invitingly bright colors in both the collages of parts and the coherent portraits of the featured objects. This perceptual puzzle doesn't possess the sequential and detailed focus of Roger Bester's *Guess What?* (BCCB 5/80), but Rotner's less exacting approach will be a cheery and useful addition to storytime guessing games. EAB

SHAN, DARREN *Cirque du Freak: The Saga of Darren Shan*. Little, 2001 266p
ISBN 0-316-60340-6 \$15.95

M Gr. 5-8

Darren Shan is (supposedly) just an ordinary kid who (supposedly) wrote this book about his journey to the dark side. An oddly obtained ticket to an illegal freak show places Darren and his best friend, Steve, in the darkness of an abandoned theater, where, to their terror and delight, they are treated to acts involving Snake Boy, Wolf Man, and Mr. Crepsley and his performing pet, Madame Octa, a very poisonous spider. Darren witnesses Steve's after-performance encounter with Crepsley, whom Steve recognizes as a vampire. Knowledge of Crepsley's vampirism doesn't stop Darren—enraptured by the spider Madame Octa, he sneaks into the theater and steals her; a contrived chain of events then puts Darren into Crepsley's power and forces the boy to become the vampire's servant. Narrator Darren has an affected, too-adult voice, and the book's pace (it takes nearly a hundred pages before Darren even gets to the freak show) is slowed by too much explanation and not enough action (the descriptions of the players' interactions

with the poisonous spider aren't nearly exciting enough to merit their length). In fantasy-horror, the characters must be strong enough to anchor an unbelievable premise in order to allow the suspension of disbelief to take place. Here, unfortunately, the characters are emotionally shallow, and they lack both imagination and believable motivation. The character of Mr. Crepsley is the most fully developed; the author appears to find Crepsley more interesting than Darren, and as a result he shortchanges his own protagonist. Horror and the supernatural have a built in audience, however, and the action here may hold uncritical readers. JMD

SIEBERT, DIANE *Mississippi*; illus. by Greg Harlin. HarperCollins, 2001 [34p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-16446-3 \$16.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-16445-5 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 7-10 yrs

In a poetic paean to the "Father of Waters," Siebert traces the history of the river and of the people who settle its valley and exploit its economic bounty over the centuries. Although she creditably conveys her sense of awe at the vastness of the river system and the diversity of enterprises along its banks, verses are often more heartfelt than polished ("Then dreaming dreams of long ago,/ On down to Hannibal I flow,/ Where happy memories remain/ Of steamboats, and a man called Twain") and are occasionally even trite ("And where these many paths converged,/ Their channeled waters rose and surged/ Down through the land, creating me—/ A river, young and wild and free"). Harlin's watercolor scenes, despite their gauzy focus, boast a brawny vitality that suits Big River to a tee and provide much needed respite in an overlong text. There's simply too much iambic tetrameter for all but the most ardent river rats to wade through, and armchair tourists will probably be happier with Peter Lourie's straightforward *Mississippi River* (BCCB 10/00). EB

SPENCER, ANN, comp. and ad. *Song of the Sea: Myths, Tales, and Folklore*; illus. by Mark Lang. Tundra, 2001 198p

ISBN 0-88776-487-8 \$17.95

R Gr. 3-7

From Sedna to Scylla, from mermaids to sea-monsters, from pirates to ghosts, Spencer cuts a broad swathe through sea lore and legend in this handsomely designed volume. Interspersed among folktales from China, legends from classical Greece, and other tales are bits of sailor superstitions and ocean lore. Full and half-page black-and-white line drawings feature romantic yet robust images of gods and (mer)men, and small ornamental details decorate the pages. Despite the sometimes fulsome writing and occasional careless phrase, Spencer's compact retellings have a potent energy that will appeal to young readers and storytellers. While detailed notes specific to each tale are not provided, a list of source books is included. JMD

SPIRES, ELIZABETH, ad. *I Am Arachne: Fifteen Greek and Roman Myths*; illus. by Mordicai Gerstein. Foster/Farrar, 2001 98p

ISBN 0-374-33525-7 \$16.00

Ad Gr. 3-6

Spires retells fifteen classical myths—Arachne, Pandora, King Midas, Callisto, etc.—in the first person, each tale narrated by the story's protagonist. This is an interesting if not untried approach to myths and legends (Orgel's *We Goddesses*, BCCB 11/99; McClaren's *Waiting for Odysseus*, 2/00), and making the pantheon personal sometimes results in more accessible tales. These retellings, unfortunately,

are oversimplified and repetitive; the choppy monologues lack momentum, and the tone is anachronistic. Full-page black-and-white line drawings open each tale, and while the featured characters are expressively rendered, the scribbly lines are sometimes overly busy. On the plus side, the sentences are short and the language is direct, making the stories much easier for younger readers to access. Spires doesn't include any source notes, but there is a glossary of names and places. JMD

THESMAN, JEAN *In the House of the Queen's Beasts*. Viking, 2001 167p
ISBN 0-670-89285-8 \$15.99 R Gr. 4-7

Emily is thrilled to move to a new home, leaving old enemies behind, and she's intrigued by Rowan, the shy girl from the house behind Emily's. The two become friends despite the strictures of Rowan's stern and controlling father; they meet only in Emily's treehouse, which Emily is decorating with Rowan's help and where Rowan keeps her wood carvings of animals, the Queen's Beasts. Emily soon begins to realize that Rowan's father is more than just strict, and she becomes increasingly worried about her friend and unsure of what, if anything, she should do to assist. Thesman (author of *Calling the Swan*, BCCB 11/00) has a smooth and fluent style, and Emily's narration is an authentic blend of thoughtful and pushy. The book underscores its theme by paralleling her uncertainty about her responsibility in Rowan's case with her similar uncertainty about her older brother's clandestine escapades with a heedless friend, but that exploration is capably balanced by a solid and humorous domestic strand. The "should I tell?" issue often gets a preachy and oversimplified treatment; this is a serious exploration with no easy answers in a solid story. DS

THOMAS, SHELLEY MOORE *A Baby's Coming to Your House!*; illus. with photographs by Eric Futran. Whitman, 2001 32p
ISBN 0-8075-0502-1 \$15.95 R 2-5 yrs

Make room on your parenting shelf for this addition to the "new baby comes home" genre. Thomas' language is simple but not simplistic, and she keeps her audience firmly in mind when explaining the chronology of events that accompany the imminent arrival of a new sibling, from the overt physical changes caused by pregnancy ("The first thing you notice is your mommy's tummy. It gets bigger, and her lap gets smaller") to the multitudinous items such as cribs, strollers, car seats, toys, etc. that crowd the home ("Who would think that a person so small would need so much stuff?"). Easily digested bits of information regarding silly grownup and responsible older-sibling behavior are scattered throughout the friendly, reassuring text, along with a couple of warnings as well: "Don't bounce it [the baby] or pinch it or you won't get to hold it very much"; "Sometimes it is a good idea to go outside when the baby starts to smell, just to be safe." Cheerful color photographs (many of the poses appearing to be candid) arranged in a casual scrapbook style feature a multicultural cast of families and friends. This is a comforting introduction to a sometimes anxiety-inducing event. JMD

TORREY, MICHELE *The Case of the Gasping Garbage*; illus. by Barbara Johansen Newman. Dutton, 2001 [112p]
ISBN 0-525-46657-6 \$14.99
Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 2-4

Doyle and Fossey (fifth-graders Drake Doyle and Nell Fossey) are business part-

ners—they're science detectives (with their own new easy-reader series). In competition with their arch rival James Frisco, *Mad Scientist*, they employ science to solve the mysteries of their schoolmates. In eight short chapters they save a girl from a garbage monster (live bread dough making respiratory noises), create a traffic bypass for frogs, extricate a truck stuck under a bridge, and ascertain the author of a series of love letters. There are some entertaining science slants (and kids who haven't previously heard the "let the air out of the tires" story will adore the solution's elegant simplicity), but the narrative never lifts above the pedestrian and the balance of concepts and character is flawed. Some of Doyle and Fossey's experiments are fairly repeatable, though, and a fifteen-page section on activities may galvanize some readers into beginning science or at least into clicking on relevant websites. Black-and-white spot art and full-page illustrations have a loopy intensity that adds a bit of spice to the story. DS

VAN STEENWYK, ELIZABETH *Let's Go to the Beach: A History of Sun and Fun by the Sea*. Holt, 2001 [144p] illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-8050-6235-1 \$17.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-7

Van Steenwyk presents not so much a history of beachgoing as some thematic ruminations on seashores, lakeshores (and the odd river bank) and the pleasures and diversions they offer. Some history necessarily figures in, particularly in her discussions of the expansion of seaside amusement parks and the diminution of swimwear over time. Many chapters, though, amount to little more than catalogs of activities and appurtenances: "Things to Do at the Beach," "Sports for Surf and Sand," "Beach Equipment," "Actors and Artists at the Beach." Enthusiasm too often gives way to questionable overstatement ("[The sixties] was a decade dedicated to the youth of the nation whose life's work seemed to be found only at the beach"; "The Beach Boys were a major socioeconomic phenomenon of the sixties"), and the effort of reviewing American history in relation to beaches sometimes goes over the edge: "It was apparent that Lewis and Clark had discovered a major waterway of transportation across the nation, eventually discovering a beach, too." Still, there's an extensive gallery of inviting photos of sand castles, roller coasters, surfboards, and vintage swimsuits, and come winter this could be just what the doctor ordered for sun-deprived readers aching for balmier days and sand between their toes. A timeline, bibliography, and index will be included. EB

VIORST, JUDITH *Super-Completely and Totally the Messiest*; illus. by Robin Preiss Glasser. Atheneum, 2001 32p
ISBN 0-689-82941-8 \$16.00

Ad 6-9 yrs

The individual deserving of the titular title is Sophie, the little sister of the narrator, Olivia. While Olivia is a tidy and orderly person and brother Jake is mildly disheveled, Sophie is in a class of her own. Her room is a disaster area (she once disappeared in the fallout when she opened her closet door), and she can wreck her desk area at school or herself when she's going to a party in nothing flat. Olivia and her parents entreat her to be more careful and neat, like Olivia, but it looks like that day will be awhile in coming. This is basically a very long list of messinesses, so there really isn't a story. Olivia's CAPITALS-laden narration smacks realistically of vexation, however, and kids both clean and hygiene-challenged will find plenty in Sophie's habits to snicker at ("But once when our dad was combing her

hair he combed out a whistle, a ring, and a piece of a sandwich"). The illustrations depend on elaborate nets of fine squiggly lines, with watercolors redeeming Sophie and occasional individuals and items within her orbit from the obscurity of black-and-white; some of the scenes are too crowded even for close-up viewing, but Sophie's electric presence will draw the eye throughout. The chaos is funny, and Olivias may find the distance therapeutic—Sophies, of course, will just enjoy the attention. DS

WARNER, SALLY *Finding Hattie*. HarperCollins, 2001 227p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-028455-2 \$15.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028464-1 \$15.95

R Gr. 6-9

The Hubbards do their best not to treat fourteen-year-old Hattie Knowlton as a poor relative, but the newly orphaned girl thrust into their care has not been raised according to their social standards and it quickly becomes clear to Hattie that the advantages so graciously lavished upon her are supposed to be accepted with humility and repaid with unquestioning obedience. Hattie accompanies her older cousin Sophie to her upscale boarding school and is promptly (and genuinely) accepted into Sophie's clique, but a bullying schoolmate who knows Hattie's lowly background and a boisterous nouveau riche girl rock Hattie's social boat and force her to decide just how much subservience is too much. Warner draws inspiration for Hattie's story from the schoolgirl journal of her own great-grandmother, embellishing it with luscious swipes of sharp-clawed cattiness and opulently detailed descriptions of finery that fans of nineteenth-century boarding-school stories crave. While this won't draw tears like *A Little Princess*, it will satisfy any reader with that secret dream of being a feisty orphan herself. EB

WEEKS, SARAH *My Guy*. Geringer/HarperCollins, 2001 [192p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-028370-X \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028369-6 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-7

Guy Strang (from *Regular Guy*, BCCB 7/99 and *Guy Time*, 5/00) is appalled when his mother announces her engagement to professional clown (and all-around weird guy) Jerry Zuckerman. Guy's objection isn't just because Jerry is a little strange, but because Jerry is the father of Lana Zuckerman, whom Guy describes as "mean as a snake and about equally appealing." Lana, it turns out, is not thrilled by the prospect of having Guy for a stepbrother, so, at the instigation of school chum Buzz, Guy and Lana join forces to break up the engagement. The two unwilling future stepsiblings make lists of what drives each parent crazy and, using the lists, host a disastrous (and hilarious) dinner party. This title doesn't have quite the lure of the previous entries, the plot concentrates more on the grownups than the kids, but it's still a humorous romp. Weeks is a whiz at evocative imagery, and the pictures conjured by her descriptions of Guy's mother's creative clothing are just this side of antic (picture the bride in a dress made of styrofoam cups, reciting this poem to the groom: "Most things on earth come and go,/ ebb and flow like the sea,/ But our love is like Styrofoam,/ here for all eternity"). While the resolution is overly optimistic, in the final analysis Guy is a funny guy, and readers will appreciate his dilemma. JMD

WELLS, ROSEMARY *Felix Feels Better*; written and illus. by Rosemary Wells. Candlewick, 2001 [32p]
 ISBN 0-7636-0639-1 \$12.99
 Reviewed from galleys R* 3-5 yrs

Poor little Felix overdoses on chocolate blimpies, and the next morning he's the worse for wear: "You look peaky, Felix," said Felix's mama." Solicitous maternal ministrations such as the provision of sugared prunes don't jolt Felix from his malaise, "so Felix's mama called the doctor." Felix is at first uncomfortable with Dr. Duck, but the examination proves painless and a dose of Happy Tummy sets Felix back on the road to health. Wells vitalizes the introductory visit-to-the-doctor reassurance with her characteristic spirited charm. The concise text is imbued with personality and telling accuracy, and the specifics ("Doctor Duck let Felix's mama stay with him the whole time") provide a cozy demystification of the medical encounter. Thick colored frames add to the sense of control and enclosure, but fuzzy little Felix has presence that exceeds all boundaries; in his healthy state he's gleefully bouncing off the bed, but when under the weather, his eyes worried, his little guinea-pig mouth pouting, he's practically a rodent Camille. This has plot enough to be a successful story in its own right, but it's also much more credible than self-interested parents when it comes to encouragement about trips to the doctor; prescribe a copy for the waiting room of your favorite pediatrician. DS

WILCOX, BRIAN *Full Moon*; by Brian Wilcox and Lawrence David; illus. by Brian Wilcox. Doubleday, 2001 [32p]
 ISBN 0-385-32792-7 \$15.95
 Reviewed from galleys Ad 5-8 yrs

A boy's birthday gift from his grandmother, a crystal globe of her home city, inspires a nighttime journey. He hitches himself to the moon and orders it to take him to his grandmother, and he's taken through a fantastical night sky filled with amusement park rides, flying cowboys, and circus acts (he also swings low enough to encounter magic on the ground), until finally he ends up at a big party on the Statue of Liberty, where his grandmother (astride an elephant) receives him with delight. This is essentially a dream narrative (complete with the "And then I woke up" ending), including the alluring details and the general absence of logic; as a consequence it doesn't really hold together as a story, and the elements aren't particularly inventively employed. Wilcox's soft monochromatic illustrations display dream and non-dream world in shades of gray; while this palette adds a hazy and effective atmosphere it also makes the vision sometimes uninterestingly homogeneous, undercutting the fascination of the dream elements. Those elements are still worth pursuing, however, and kids will enjoy scoping out the illustrations in search of entertaining items and facets of Manhattan. Despite the lack of edge and focus, this is a pretty sequence of nocturnal imaginings. DS

WILSON, NANCY HOPE *Mountain Pose*. Farrar, 2001 233p
 ISBN 0-374-35078-7 \$17.00 Ad Gr. 4-7

At the death of her estranged grandmother, Aurelia, Ellie Dunklee is bequeathed Hart Farm and a suitcase of old family diaries. Ellie and her best friend, Leese, start reading through the diaries, and they begin to find eerie coincidences, begin-

ning with a Sara Evans, with whom Ellie shares a birthday. As Ellie reads farther into the diaries, she begins to unravel the story of her mother's family, while remaining perplexed by sections hidden in code. She seeks assistance from Mary, an old friend of her mother's who was recently Aurelia's neighbor and chosen lawyer, and finds that the code illuminates dark family secrets from generations ago, accounting for Aurelia's odd behavior. The story seems disparate, with references to Aurelia's estrangement, her daughter's psychological therapy, yoga poses (yoga is used as a framing device for the book—beginning and ending with the Mountain Pose of the title), Ellie's dad's upcoming tenure review, and his distant girlfriend, until the pieces begin to fit together and the plot gains its own life, just as the pieces of Aurelia's story come together to reveal the complex bonds of family and friendship. Wilson chooses to resolve the story without wrapping it up neatly, which makes for a powerful conclusion despite the overcomplicated narrative. An author's note on the historical codes in the book is appended. EAB

WULFFSON, DON L. *The Kid Who Invented the Trampoline: More Surprising Stories about Inventions*. Dutton, 2001 [128p] illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-525-46654-1 \$15.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 3-6

Rather than examine a handful of inventions in depth, Wulffson simply holds forth on lots of stuff—from false teeth to rubber boots, from leotards to toilet paper. Several dozen items step alphabetically into the spotlight, and it's pretty obvious that the page or two allotted to each cannot begin to accommodate a serious history (e.g., the camera is dispatched in five paragraphs, one of which is a mere sentence long). No source notes are provided, and without such citation readers may rightly begin to question how much is promotional lore and how much is the honest-to-gosh truth. Furthermore, Wulffson occasionally overplays his hand at wooing an audience with chummy, breathless informality: "It sounds too silly to be true. But the first-known baby bottle was a dried cow's udder!" (Just how silly is this? What else is a cow's udder for?) Still, this is a browser's Valhalla, with oodles of pictures and nifty sidebar clips ("In eighteenth century Europe, people took to shaving off their eyebrows and attaching fake ones of mouse skin"). Hand this to a "reluctant reader" and watch the pages fly. EB

YACCARINO, DAN *Oswald the Octopus*; written and illus. by Dan Yaccarino. Atheneum, 2001 [34p]

ISBN 0-689-84252-X \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 4-7 yrs

Oswald is an engaging octopus who's embarking on life in Big City along with his dog, Weenie. The move hits a hitch when his attempts to get his piano up the stairs backfire, and it starts rolling down the street past various denizens of the neighborhood. Henry the Penguin, his friend Daisy, and other locals lend a hand and, powered by a few treats, they manage to install the piano in Oswald's new place and celebrate with music and dancing. When not starring in picture books, Oswald features in a Nickelodeon network cartoon, and this title does suggest the introductory first episode; there's less plot here than situation and character appearance, and though the characters are appealing, audiences will be waiting for something active to happen. There's a cozy and cheerful feel here, however, and the cast is worth watching. Oswald is a round ball of royal-blue octopus sporting

a fetching derby perched on his head, and Weenie is, of course, a wiener dog; along with the offbeat but charming cast of Henry the Penguin, Daisy the daisy, Egbert and Leo the egg twins, Madame Butterfly and her daughter Catriona the caterpillar, they float in an airy background of the palest cream, which presumably is oceanic enough to support Oswald. This may become more significant in context with the cartoon or with future volumes, and the friendly and unusual cast may be enough to appeal to young viewers even without additional context. DS

ZINNEN, LINDA *The Truth about Rats, Rules, and Seventh Grade.* HarperCollins, 2001 [160p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-028800-8 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-028799-3 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-7

Larch Waysorta hasn't made it to seventh grade without understanding the unspoken rules of her family, especially the rule that forbids her from asking her mother about the death of her father: "Do not ask Elaine Mae Waysorta (mother) a direct question about her husband, Christopher Allen Waysorta (deceased)." A bright and funny girl, she finds this restriction annoying but acceptable, and she concentrates instead on the humorous travails of junior high. It's therefore quite a shock to her when, on a class assignment to interview the school janitor, she finds out that her mother was driving the car in the accident in which her father died. Larch reacts with fury, considering her mother her father's murderer, but the rules have been so inculcated that she's having a hard time even mentioning the subject. Despite the serious theme, this is quite a breezy and funny book, which melds its somber subject with lighter subplots such as a stray dog's initially helpful ratcatching and Larch's friend's burgeoning affection for the handsome class nuisance. Larch has a witty voice ("When I look around our class and think, 'Well, here's what we'll be dragging to the high school prom,' honestly, I get sick to my stomach"), and the book provides some effective slapstick scenes (the notion of a rat up the trouser leg will stay in many readers' minds). Larch's anger is also understandable, however; though touches of the resolution are contrived, her obsession and its leaking out into the rest of her life rings true. This will be just right for kids looking for daily-life comedy with a serious edge. DS



PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS: RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS

Lehr, Susan, ed. *Beauty, Brains, and Brawn: The Construction of Gender in Children's Literature*. Heinemann, 2001. Paper ed. ISBN 0-325-00284-3; \$21.00. 211p.

Susan Lehr, professor of Children's Literature and Reading at Skidmore College in New York, has compiled a collection of fourteen essays on gender in contemporary children's literature. In the opening essay Lehr poses the question, "When we talk about female and male, what is actually biologically based?" and then proceeds to differentiate between the terms "sex" and "gender." Deborah Thompson takes on the publishing phenomenon of the Harry Potter series and finds disappointingly limiting roles for females in the popular titles; Barbara Chatton discusses illustrative images of boys and girls in children's picture books and the manner in which preschoolers "typically assign gender to characters using gender stereotypes." In the only essay that directly addresses images of boys and men in children's literature, Daniel P. Woolsey discusses coming of age as a universal process. Belinda A. Louie cites "deep-seated socialized thinking" as a barrier to eliminating gender bias in children's literature, and in a call-to-arms essay, Kathy G. Short argues for a conscious and deliberate choice of politically aware pedagogy. While the research quality of the essays is uneven, the questions raised by this title are vital, and they will provoke much needed discussion. Ten author profiles are also included. JMD

Van Orden, Phyllis. *Selecting Books for the Elementary School Library Media Center: A Complete Guide*. Neal-Schuman, 2000. Paper ed. ISBN 1-55570-368-32; \$49.95. 212p.

This useful introduction focuses on book-selection issues in school libraries, but public libraries will find this title equally helpful. Van Orden opens with chapters about establishing and applying general criteria for book selection, reflecting diversity in the collection, and using selection tools. Subsequent sections address basic criteria for evaluating particular genres (picture books, fiction, folktales, poetry, nonfiction, reference books, etc.), and the author emphasizes the importance of practitioners' having a wide range of knowledge regarding the available literature. Each chapter includes references, recommended resources, representative authors (and illustrators, where applicable), and bibliographic information for books mentioned in the text. Well-organized and cleanly designed, this title would be a boon for new librarians or paraprofessionals trying to get a handle on what can be a daunting task. Use this with Jane Gardner Connor's *Children's Library Services Handbook* for a crash course in practical library management. A glossary and an index are also included. JMD

SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

Keyed to *The Bulletin's* alphabetical arrangement by author, this index, which appears in each issue, can be used in three ways. Entries in regular type refer to subjects; entries in **bold type** refer to curricular or other uses; entries in ALL-CAPS refer to genres and appeals. In the case of subject headings, the subhead "stories" refers to books for the readaloud audience; "fiction," to those books intended for independent reading.

ADVENTURE STORIES: Pierce
Protector

African Americans-fiction: Rosales

Art and artists: Greenberg

Aunts-fiction: Alexander

Babies: Thomas

Babies-stories: Meyers

Beaches: Van Steenwyk

BEDTIME STORIES: Kelly;
Wilcox

Bicycles-stories: Olaleye

BIOGRAPHIES: Greenberg;
Hopkinson; Orgill

Birds: Lerner

Birthdays-stories: Ashman

Books and reading-stories: Burleigh

Bridges: Curlee

Brothers and sisters-fiction: Eccles;
Hautman; Hearne; Powell;
Thesman

Brothers-fiction: Buchanan

Bullies-fiction: Deans

Bullies-stories: Caseley

Child abuse-fiction: Deans

Civil War-fiction: Rinaldi

Colonial life: Howard

Cooking: Hopkinson

Cousins-fiction: Warner

Crime and criminals-stories:
Durant

Death and dying-fiction: Brooks;
Hogeweg; Mead; Zinnen

Detectives-fiction: Torrey

Diets-fiction: Pinkwater

Doctors-stories: Wells

Dreams-stories: Wilcox

Drug abuse-fiction: Ratcliffe

Ecology: Lasky

Ethics and values: Brooks; Bunting;
Gallo; Olaleye; Powell; Thesman

Families-fiction: Ratcliffe

FANTASY: Alexander; Hearne;
Pierce *Circle*; Pierce *Protector*;
Rodda; Shan

Farms-stories: Kinsey-Warnock

Fathers and daughters-fiction:
Weeks; Wilson

Fathers and sons-fiction: Deans;
Powell

Fears-fiction: Rodda

FOLKTALES AND FAIRY TALES:
Spencer

Food and eating: Hopkinson

Friendship-fiction: Pinkwater;
Shan; Thesman; Torrey

FUNNY STORIES: Ashman;
Pinkwater; Weeks

Gangs-fiction: Pierce *Circle*

Gold Rush: Rau

Grandmothers-fiction: Hogeweg

Grandmothers-stories: Kinsey-
Warnock; Wilcox

HISTORICAL FICTION:

Buchanan; Hoobler; Rinaldi;
Rosales; Warner

History, U.S.: Curlee; Edwards;
Hopkinson; Howard; Orgill;
Rau; Van Steenwyk

History, world: Greenberg

HORROR: Shan

Houses-poetry: Lewis

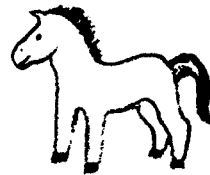
Illness-fiction: Alexander

Illness-stories: Wells

Insects-poetry: McKelvey

Inventions: Wulffson
 Japan-fiction: Hoobler
Language arts: McKelvey; Janeczko
Poke; Let's; Lewis
 Llamas: Livingstone
 Magic and magicians-fiction:
 Hearne; Pierce *Circle*
 Magic and magicians-stories:
 Ashman
 Miners and mining: Rau
 Mothers and daughters-fiction:
 Hearne; Zinnen
 Mothers and sons-fiction: Weeks
 Mothers and sons-stories: Kelly;
 Wells
 Moving-stories: Yaccarino
 MYSTERIES: Hoobler
 MYTHOLOGY, CLASSICAL:
 Spires
Nature study: Lasky; Lerner
 Neatness-stories: Viorst
 Nigeria-stories: Olaleye
 Ocean-stories: Spencer
 Orphans-fiction: Buchanan;
 Warner
 Pigs-fiction: Hearne
 POETRY: Janeczko *Dirty*; Janeczko
Poke; Let's; Lewis; Lillegard;
 McKelvey
 Rabbits-stories: Durant
 Ranching: Livingstone
Reading aloud: Eccles; Hogeweg;
 Janeczko *Dirty*; Janeczko *Poke*;
 Lewis; Spencer; Spires
Reading, beginning: *Let's*
Reading, easy: Howard; Torrey
 Religion-fiction: Hogeweg
Religious instruction: Bedard
 Revolution, American: Edwards
 RHYMING STORIES: Ashman;
 Durant; Meyers
 RIDDLES: Rotner

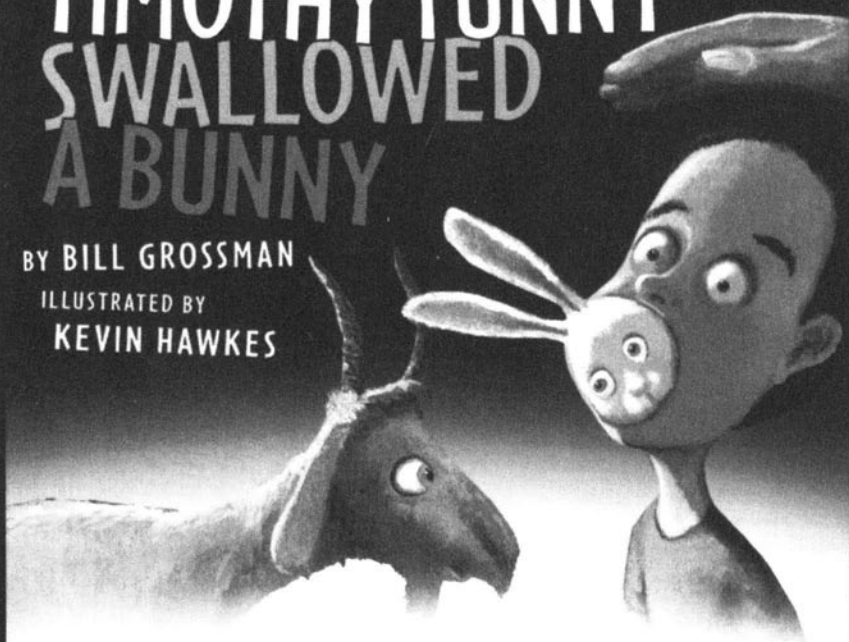
Rivers-poetry: Siebert
 Saints-stories: Bedard
 School-poetry: Lillegard
 School-stories: Caseley
Science: Lerner
 Science-fiction: Torrey
 SCIENCE FICTION: Hautman
 Secrets-fiction: Wilson
 Self-esteem-fiction: Pinkwater
 Sheep: Livingstone
 SHORT STORIES: Gallo; Macy
 Singers: Orgill
 Sisters-stories: Viorst
 Sports: Macy
 Sports-poetry: Macy
Storytelling: Bedard; Spencer; Spires
Storytime: *Let's*; Rotner
 SURVIVAL STORIES: Hautman
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 Toys-fiction: Rosales
 Trains-stories: Kelly
 Turtles: Lasky
 Vampires-fiction: Shan
 Voyages and travel-stories: Kelly
 War-fiction: Mead
 Weather-poetry: *Let's*
 Wishes-fiction: Hearne
 Wolves-stories: Bedard
Women's studies: Orgill
 Writers and writing-fiction: Eccles



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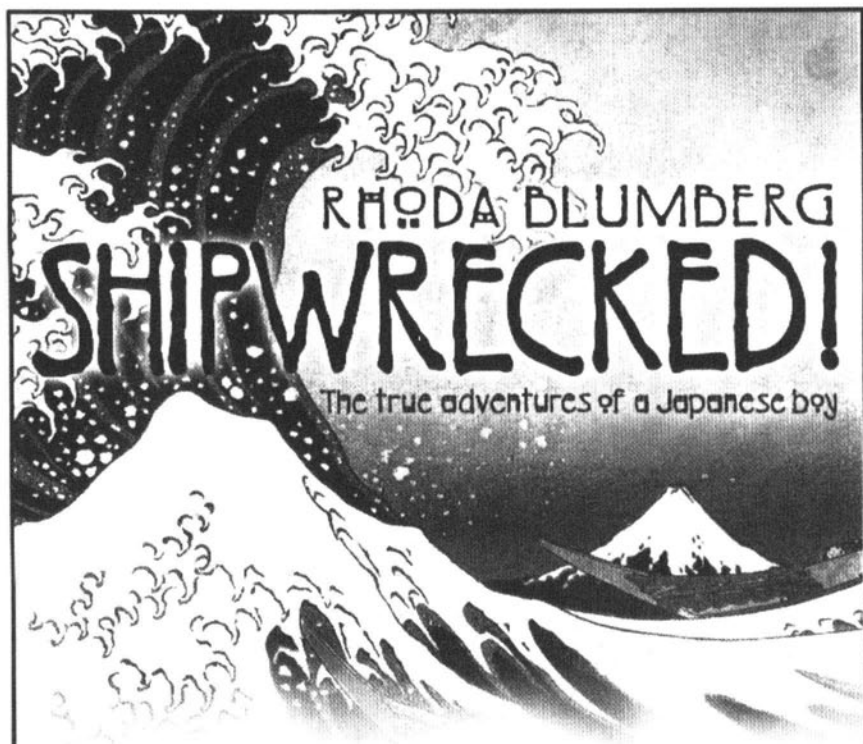
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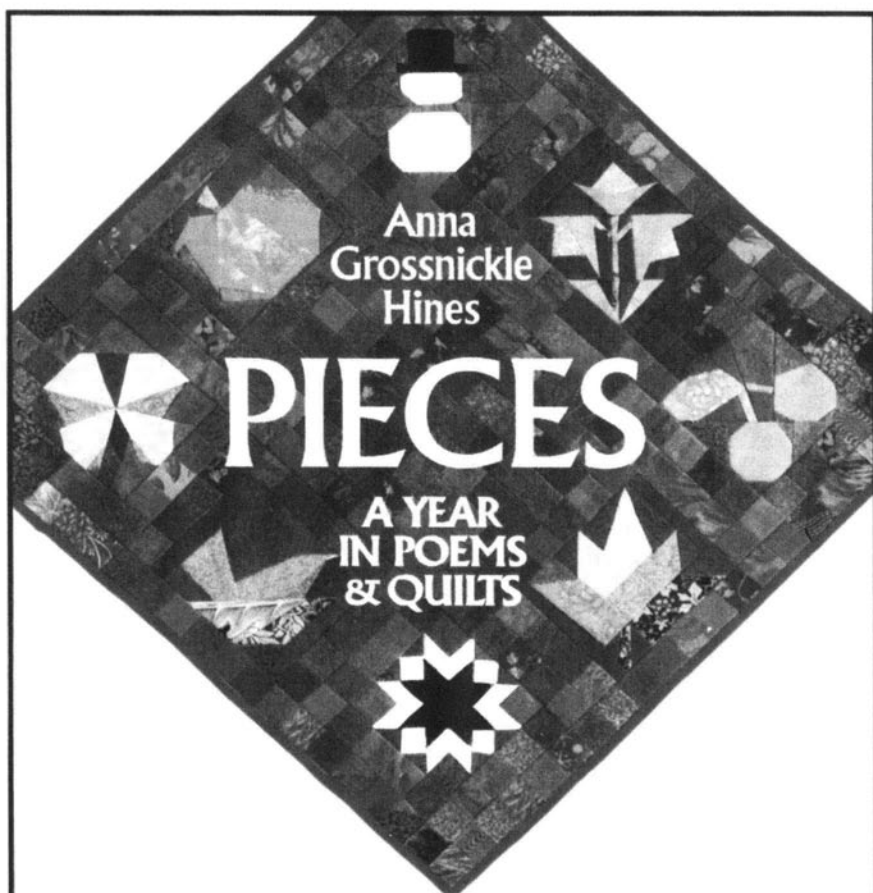
— Rhoda Blumberg's Newbery Honor Book —

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—Starred review / *Publishers Weekly*

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—Starred review / *ALA Booklist*

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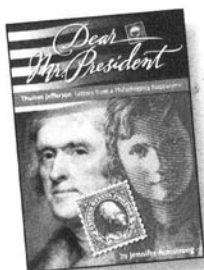


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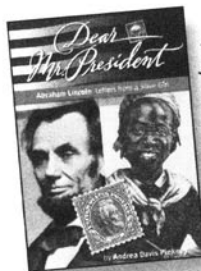


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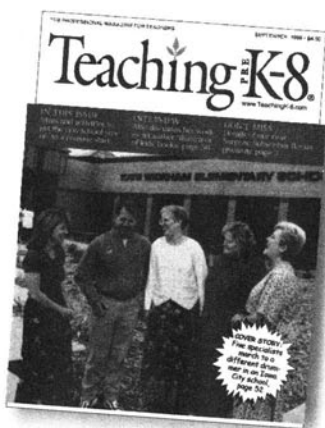
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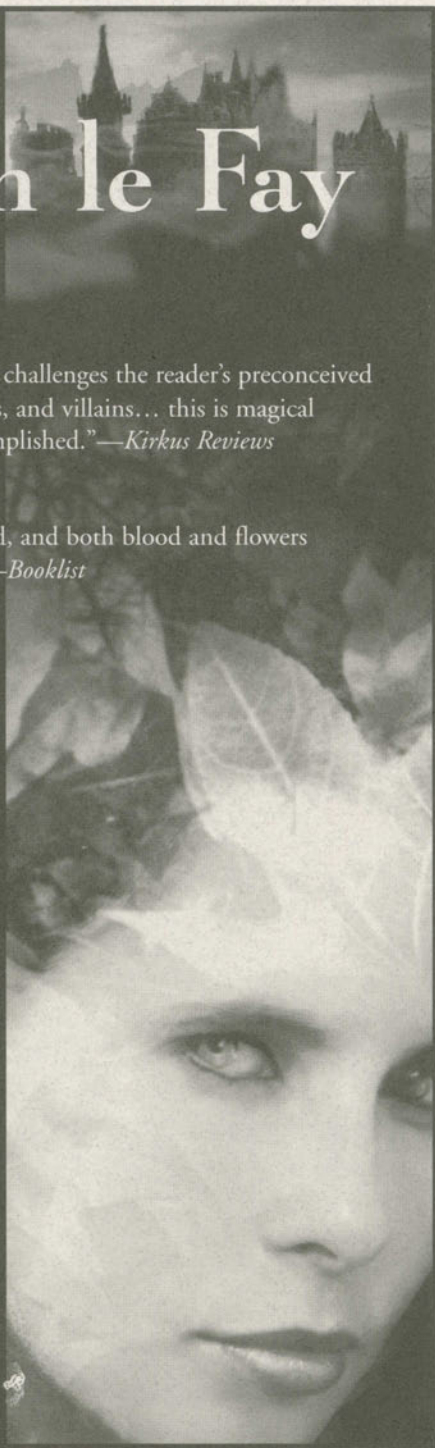
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